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Reintegration: The stories of four students' return to the mainstream classroom

by

Dana Enid Antayá–Moore

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July 17, 1999

Abstract

The stories of four students' return to the mainstream classroom from a learning disabilities program are told in this study. Two students continue to succeed in the mainstream classroom while two found the mainstream classroom academically overwhelming and returned to the learning disabilities program. Self-awareness, advocacy, support networks, goal setting, and a classroom context which welcomes questions and supports students with learning disabilities, are identified as key factors in a successful reintegration experience. "At what point do students become dependent on segregated special needs programs for their academic success?" is a significant question coming out of the students' experiences. As well, a possible gender difference is suggested as the girls are found to take a pro-active approach to their reintegration by asking questions and telling teachers about their learning disability, while the boys are more passive, asking fewer questions and withholding information about their learning disability from their teachers.

Acknowledgments

I have been involved in the area of learning disabilities, as both a teacher and a writer, for the past 12 years. In that time, I have challenged myself to find ways to help all students be more successful learners. I have become a better teacher and writer. This thesis is a result of those challenges.

I would like to thank my advisor Dr. Robert Mulcahy. His questions encourage me to think critically about my work.

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Introduction

Rationale Behind the Study

In November, 1996, a large school district in Alberta released the findings of its review of the district's learning disabilities program. Carried out in the spring of 1996, this review was a response to concerns of staff and parents regarding the changes the program has undergone, including: growing class sizes, reduced teacher assistant time, and the number of students leaving the program who were not succeeding in the mainstream. The review examined the potential influence of these changes on the effectiveness of the program. Summarized below is an overview of the history of the learning disabilities program, taken from the November, 1996 Learning Disabilities Program Review.

The school district first began a two year pilot of the learning disabilities program in 1984. The program provided short-term intensive programming for students with learning disabilities. After receiving this programming for a two year period, students were expected to increase their academic achievement to the point that they could return successfully to the regular classroom setting without further assistance. Students accepted into the program were those who had above average intelligence, were functioning two years below grade level expectations, had supportive families, and did not demonstrate behaviour or attendance problems. A further goal of the pilot was to identify successful teaching strategies and to enhance teacher competencies in meeting the needs of students with learning disabilities.

Following a review of the pilot project, the learning disabilities program was implemented as a continuing part of district operations in 1988. At that time, the mandate of a two year intensive program was endorsed. In 1989, at the request of parents, the two year limit on program eligibility was reexamined and the need for continued support for students with learning disabilities was addressed. Changes implemented included the introduction of a new category of funding called academic assistance and the replacement of the two year program at the high school level with an academic assistance program with an open time

limit. Academic assistance funding provided dollars to the receiving school to use during the transition year for those students in elementary or junior high who were judged to need support in the regular classroom. How this money was spent was a decision of the school administrator.

As the numbers of students within the learning disabilities program increased, so too did the call for programming without time limits. Reasons for this included: a larger proportion of students who were viewed as being unable to cope with the demands of the regular classroom after a period of two years, the number of students who had returned to regular programming for a year or two and were then identified in subsequent years as once again requiring assistance and new strategies to cope with increasing curricular demands, the life-long characteristic of a learning disability, and the precedent set by private schools who do not set time limits.

In 1993 the two year limit on program eligibility was removed. Placement in the learning disabilities program continues to be made for a two year period with a re-evaluation carried out at the end of two years to determine if students continue to meet the criteria for the program. While the goal of the program remains the successful reintegration of students into the regular program, what has changed is the length of time students may remain in the program before reintegration occurs.

Since 1988, the numbers of students in the learning disabilities program has shown a marked increase due to a growing number of students being identified as learning disabled and more students remaining in the learning disabilities program beyond the initial two year time period. At the same time, the additive funding allocated for students with special needs was capped at 12% of the district allocation for all students. Together these factors have resulted in larger class sizes within the learning disabilities program as well as a reduced level of resources available to many of the programs.

Purpose of the Study

Decisions regarding the readiness of students to be reintegrated into the regular program take many factors into consideration. In addition to the academic re-evaluation that is carried out at the end of each two year period, factors such as the social maturity of the student and his or her independence as a learner are taken into consideration when making decisions. Ultimately, results of the academic re-evaluation are given the most weight in the decision making process. The assessment results determine whether a student meets the criteria of the program and should continue to receive funding. Currently, students scoring below the 25 percentile in two or more academic areas qualify for continued funding.

When students leave the learning disabilities program, it is assumed that they have the skills and abilities necessary to be successful in the regular classroom. For some students, this reintegration happens after two years in the program while for other students it may take longer. Findings of the learning disabilities program review suggest that the longer the student remains in the program, the less likely it is that the student will be recommended for regular programming.

As a teacher in a learning disabilities program for the past seven years, I have a vested interest in the reintegration process. I want the students who leave my class each year to be prepared for their return to the regular classroom. I want them to have a positive and successful experience. To this end, I structure my class and my teaching in a way that I believe will best prepare them to re-enter the regular classroom.

I have strong views on the education of children with learning disabilities including: the need for transition support for students reintegrating into the regular classroom, the importance of cognitive strategy instruction both within the segregated and regular classroom, the need for supportive parent involvement, and a reframing of the language of learning disabilities to focus on what the students can do: their abilities rather than their disabilities. These views are based primarily on my experience and are supported in the literature. As principal investigator, I am aware that I must hold these views separate

throughout my study so that they do not bias my interactions with the participants or my interpretation of the data I collect. It is also important that I identify these views, thereby acknowledging my awareness of them.

Through my research I hope to find out what students who have been in a learning disabilities program take away with them when they leave, what they see as important. I want to know what they consider to be their successes and what have been their challenges. For students who have remained in the regular program, I want to know what works for them. For the students who have found the regular program overwhelming, I want to know what successes they experienced, what the challenges were and what they believe contributed to their difficulties.

Format

I have chosen to write this thesis in "paper format" so that the findings from the studies can be made available more quickly to educators. I have written three separate papers, all following the theme of reintegration. The first paper looks at students who reintegrated into the mainstream setting and remain there. The second paper looks at students who returned to the learning disabilities program after finding reintegration too challenging. The final paper attempts to compare the two groups of students looking for commonalties and idiosyncracies between and among them.

Reintegration: It's Hard at First but it Gets Easier

Educators are being challenged to rethink special education services to students with learning disabilities. Baker and Zigmond (1995) point to a movement to "abandon pull-out, diagnostic-prescriptive skill building, and to return students more completely to general education settings while delivering whatever specially designed instruction is needed within the confines of the general education class" (p. 163). Looking at six sites providing inclusive education for ten students with learning disabilities, Baker and Zigmond conclude that these students are receiving a very good general education. They note the willingness of each of the schools to recognize the need to improve services for students with learning disabilities and to organize a program of special education services that allows these students to participate in the educational program offered to all students. Implications for educational policy and personnel preparation are discussed, including the economic feasibility of inclusion and the ability of novice special education teachers to fulfill the role of coteacher, coplanner and consultant.

Vaughn and Schumm (1995) examine what they call the "responsible inclusion" of students with learning disabilities. They define responsible inclusion as "the development of a school-based education model that is student centered and that bases educational placement and service provision on each individual student's needs" (p. 265). They view responsible inclusion as a continuum of services. The focus is the effective procedures and outcomes that reflect appropriate instructional practices for each child with disabilities, rather than the place in which the child is educated. They identify nine key components of responsible inclusion:

- putting the needs of the student first,
- teachers choosing to participate in inclusive classrooms,
- the provision of adequate resources for inclusive classrooms,
- the development of models which are then implemented at the school-based level,
- the maintenance of a continuum of services,

- ongoing evaluation of the service delivery model,
- ongoing professional development,
- the development of a philosophy of inclusion by teachers and other key personnel, and
- the development and refinement of curricula and instruction that meet the needs of all students.

Fuchs, Fuchs, and Fernstrom (1992) identify three factors which they feel act as barriers to mainstreaming. The first factor is the attitude of mainstreaming teachers. These researchers believe that the importance of this factor is often overplayed. The second factor identified is that skills taught in more restrictive settings are often not crucial to adaptation in other least restrictive environments. Finally, they identify the failure of students to transfer skills from the restrictive setting to the mainstream as the third and most important factor.

Reasons for the failure to transfer skills from one setting to another are linked to the differences between special and regular education settings (Fuchs, Fernstrom, Reeder, Bowen, & Gilmor, 1992). They note that the instruction in resource rooms tends to differ in both content and format from that of regular education classes. As well, instructional materials are often specialized, student groupings tend to be smaller, and the use of reinforcements is higher. These differences, they add, have been implemented purposefully to promote the efficient acquisition of skills. While this is what makes special education "special," it is also what most likely interferes with the transfer of skills across settings.

The Learning Disabilities Association of America released a position paper in 1993 that speaks to the issue of the full inclusion of students with learning disabilities in the regular education classroom. Although the paper acknowledges that regular education classrooms can benefit many students with learning disabilities, it cautions that there are a number of students with learning disabilities who may need alternative instructional environments, teaching strategies and/or material that cannot and will not be provided within the context of a regular classroom placement. Decisions regarding the educational placement of students must be made on an individual basis rather than on administrative

convenience or budgetary considerations. The cooperative effort of educators, parents, and, when appropriate, the student, is essential in any decision making process.

Reintegration of Students with Learning Disabilities

There is limited research in the area of reintegrating students with learning disabilities into the regular classroom setting. The studies which do exist tend to look primarily at the reintegration of students from resource room settings to regular classroom settings. Two studies were found that explore reintegration of students from special education classes. One of these focuses exclusively on students with learning disabilities. The other study has a more general focus on students with disabilities.

George and Lewis (1991) outline a four-phase process for reintegrating students into the mainstream. Their process is one that allows teachers to make data-based decisions about students' readiness to move to a less restrictive setting. It also helps to provide a positive, fluid transition. The four phases are: long range planning, pre-exit activities, the transition, and follow-up and evaluation. Phase one, long-range planning, uses an individual education plan (IEP). It allows special education teachers to develop behavioural and academic goals and programs to ensure the students develop the competencies necessary for succeeding in the mainstream. Phase two, pre-exit activities, teaches students the necessary skills to succeed in new, less restrictive setting. The steps in this phase are: assessing the less restrictive setting, using routines from the less restrictive setting in the special class setting to give students practice with those routines, and assessing student readiness. Phase three, the transition, involves preparing the teaching staff and the students' parents for a change in placement. Phase four is student follow-up and evaluation. Also key to this process is the scheduling of consultative services for the receiving teacher. It can be on a regular or as-needed basis.

Fuchs, Fuchs, and Fernstrom (1992, 1993) examine the reintegration of students with learning disabilities on a case-by-case basis. The study evaluates a five-month effort to prepare 47 students with disabilities for a successful move from resource room to regular

classroom math instruction. Preparation for transition includes the use of "transenvironmental programming" (TP) (Anderson-Inman, 1981) and curriculum-based measurement (CBM) (Deno, 1985). Findings indicate that students in the experimental groups who are receiving TP or CBM or both, have a more positive attitude about leaving special education, more confidence about doing well in mainstream math, a conviction that they had learned more, a belief that they are perceived by their teachers as better students, and less worry about math than their nonhandicapped lower achieving peers. Teacher assigned grades were found to corroborate the students' perceptions.

In a second study, Fuchs, Fuchs, and Fernstrom (1995) evaluate the short-term and long-term effects of the case-by-case reintegration process set out in their 1992 study. Follow-up, conducted one year later in the last half of year two, found that of the 38 who were reintegrated during year one, 22 were still receiving math instruction in the regular classroom. They were concerned about this low rate of return to the mainstream, given the considerable amount of assistance provided to both special and regular educators through inservice training, provision of instructional materials, and project staffs' collaboration with the teachers, and their direct work with the students. Findings point to the need for on-going intervention to sustain the progress made by students in special education.

The Reintegration Project reported by Collins (1993) attempts to gather information about the reintegration process and examine how students progress through the system after being in a congregated (segregated) setting. Practices which may be most effective in promoting positive reintegration are discussed based on feedback from receiving schools and information from parents. Data were collected from receiving teachers using a brief questionnaire, from parents using personal interviews conducted over the phone, and from selected students using a student questionnaire administered in an interview format. Collins notes the difficulty in getting the students to respond to the open-ended question format of the questionnaire. She adds that the results of the questionnaire provides little additional information to what had already been gathered. Recommendations include the tracking of

students reintegrating into community schools from congregated settings, and the continued provision of appropriate supports for students within the context of the community school. These findings echo those of Fuchs, Fuchs, and Fernstrom (1992, 1993), Fuchs et al. (1995), and George and Lewis (1991), in calling for continued support for students with learning disabilities and the need to follow students as they move into and through the regular school system.

In a study looking at the perceptions of mainstreamed students with learning disabilities, Vaughn, Schumm, and Kouzekanani (1993) found that students with learning disabilities, who were mainstreamed into regular classrooms for more than 50% of the school day, prefer general education teachers who make adaptations and accommodate students' learning needs to those who do not.

Instructional Models

Researchers view the merging of special and regular education through co-teaching as a potential key to successful inclusion of students with learning disabilities. Walther-Thomas, Bryant, and Land (1996) state that cooperative teaching or "co-teaching" is one support model through which students with disabilities can achieve greater academic and social success. They note that, "as school systems move toward more inclusive education programs for students with disabilities, comprehensive co-planning at the district, building, and classroom levels ensures that structurally sound frameworks will be provided to support these programs" (p. 263).

Wong (1996) presents a TEAM Model as an alternative for merging special and regular education. This model focuses on integrating students with moderate disabilities such as learning disabilities, emotional disorders, behaviour disorders, and/or mild mental retardation, into the regular classroom setting. Like co-teaching, the TEAM model is implemented through team teaching between the classroom teacher and the specialist teacher. In addition, the TEAM model requires both pull-out services to provide intensive

remediation and the teaching of prerequisite skills essential for success in the integrated classroom.

Cognitive Strategy Instruction

Regardless of the instructional model used, it is critical that the instructional practices benefit all students, including those with learning disabilities. Research demonstrates that cognitive strategy instruction is an instructional practice which assists all students, including those with learning disabilities, to be more successful learners. Mulcahy (1991) focuses on the role of strategy instruction in developing autonomous learners. Wong (1987) discusses the positive effects metacognitive research has had on the teaching of students with learning disabilities. Like Mulcahy (1991), Wong advocates for the acquisition of metacognitive skills by students with learning disabilities as a means of enabling them to become autonomous and active learners. Both researchers support the need for goal-directed self-regulation in students with learning disabilities.

Ellis (1993) advocates the integration of cognitive strategy instruction and content area instruction as a means of helping adolescents with learning disabilities generalize the knowledge and strategies that they learn. His model, Integrated Strategy Instruction (ISI) involves four phases of instruction: orienting, framing, applying and extending. It provides the basis upon which resource instruction and content area class instruction can become more integrative.

Summary of the Literature Review

The research on the reintegration and mainstreaming of students with learning disabilities points to the potential for success within the parameters of a collaborative effort between regular and special educators, and the availability of adequate resources. I found few studies addressing the reintegration of students with learning disabilities from segregated programs. The research on reintegration from the resource room to the regular classroom suggests that transitions within the context of a single school will increase the chance of success as collaboration is enhanced by proximity.

The Reintegration Program presented by Collins (1993) speaks to the need for tracking students who reintegrate and for the continued provision of resources in the regular classroom. It does not however, offer suggestions on how the segregated programs might put structures and procedures in place to help ensure the successful reintegration of their students. The four-step process developed by George and Lewis (1991) has potential to be adapted for use in reintegration from segregated programs to community schools.

The students in this study attend a school jurisdiction that has no formal transition plan or model in place. Students who reintegrate into the mainstream from the learning disabilities program may receive transition support and monitoring if the receiving school or teacher requests assistance although there is no funding agreement in place to do this. When this type of informal transition planning happens, the sending and receiving teachers may meet to discuss the needs of the student and share effective strategies for working with the student. Typically, once the new school year has started, there is no formal communication between the sending and receiving teachers. Inservices on teaching students with learning disabilities are available to receiving teachers, but are not mandatory. Attendance at such inservices has declined over the last three years as professional development funds have declined.

Vaughn, Schumm, and Kouzekanani (1993) gathered students' perceptions about regular education teachers who make adaptations in their classrooms. This piece of research was the only one found that considered the perspectives of the students with learning disabilities. More opportunities are necessary for these students to share their experiences with researchers.

This article focuses on the reintegration experiences of two students with learning disabilities. After receiving two years of instruction in a learning disabilities program, both students reintegrated into regular education classes. As they shared their perceptions of their successes and challenges, the stories of these students help identify factors which help make the process of reintegration successful and those which hinder it.

Method

Qualitative Methodology

The experience of reintegration is unique to each student. Their successes and the challenges they face reflect the similarities and differences of their individual experiences. A qualitative research method best allows the research to more fully explore the experiences of the students. Qualitative data-gathering procedures are more suited to "the diversity of 'multiple realities' one finds in a complex field situation" (Borg & Gall, 1989, p. 385).

I chose a qualitative approach that "provides a way of exploring lived-experience - the actuality of experience - from the inside rather than from the natural science perspective of observation and measurement" (Osborne, 1994, p.170). My research uses data sources consisting of verbal accounts of personal experience obtained through interviews. Analysis consists of categorizing these personal experiences into meaningful structures and describing those structures.

Participants

I selected two participants for this study. Each shared their experience of reintegration from the perspective of a student who has reintegrated and continues to be educated in a regular classroom program. Scarlet is a 12 year old grade seven student, in her second year of reintegration. Eric is an 11 year old grade six student in his third year of reintegration. Scarlet and Eric are pseudonyms chosen by the students.

Instrumentation

I developed an interview questionnaire to address the issues related to the students' experience of reintegration. As shown in Table 1, nine primary questions and two supplementary questions formed the final draft of the questionnaire. In addition, I used probing to clarify their responses and to encourage each of the students to expand on their responses and/or to give specific examples to illustrate their experiences.

Procedure

After approval by the Department of Education Psychology Ethics Review Committee, I selected my participants. Each student is designated learning disabled using the criteria established by their school district for admission into the learning disabilities program. They have completed a minimum of two years in a district learning disabilities site followed by a minimum of one year in a regular classroom setting. Each of the students is continuing to receive their education in the regular program.

I approached one district learning disabilities site to obtain names of students who had reintegrated into a regular classroom within the last four years. I made contact with this site through the administrator and asked for a meeting to describe the purpose and design of the study. At the request of the administrator, we conducted the meeting over the phone. He provided me with a list of possible participants. I selected the participants from the list of names provided, based on the criteria set out previously, as well as the suggestions of a teacher in the learning disabilities program regarding those students who could best articulate their experiences in an interview situation.

As the participants were under 18 years of age, I made initial contact with their parents and obtained their consent. I made this contact by phone. The purpose and design of the study was explained and I answered any questions they had. A formal letter of consent was sent out to each parent for their signature. When I received the signed consents, I made contact with the student.

I obtained verbal consent from each participant and set up a time to meet with them. Prior to the meeting, I provided each participant with the same set of orienting instructions. These instructions explained the purpose of the study, provided participants with an idea of the kinds of experiences they would be asked to share during the interview, and assured them of the confidentiality of their responses. At the initial meeting, I obtained written consent from each participant.

I conducted the interviews at the elementary school the participants attended while in the learning disabilities program. Eric continues to attend this school while Scarlet attends a nearby junior high. We were provided with a quiet place for each meeting and the interviews were conducted with a minimum of interruptions. Eric's interview took place in a small conference room just off the school library. Interruptions made by announcements of the intercom system were largely ignored. Scarlet was interviewed after school hours in one of the learning disabilities classrooms. The start of the interview was delayed for a short time as the custodian cleaned the room and was briefly interrupted twice as the custodian returned to complete her work.

I anticipated that each interview would take approximately one hour to complete. This turned out to be an overestimation in both cases. The interview with Eric lasted approximately 35 minutes, while Scarlet's interview was approximately 45 minutes in length.

I arranged a second meeting with each participant to go through the data analysis of the first interview and to confirm my interpretation of the data.

Data Analysis

I made a tape recording of the interviews and transcribed and read them several times to become more familiar with the experiences of the participants. I identified and coded patterns and themes which emerged from the data. I then studied the similarities and differences between the participants' stories. Themes which were present in both participants' stories were identified, as were themes which were unique to each of them. I asked an assistant, not associated with the study, to read through the transcripts and provide insight into the themes I identified and the way I had coded the data within these themes. There were no disagreements in our discussion of the themes and the supporting data, however we clarified the ideas of passivity and perseverance.

I conducted the second interview at the same location. The purpose of the meeting was to check the faithfulness of my interpretations to the participant's experience. I went

through each of the themes with the participants and asked them to verify the interpretation, clarify it, or add to it in any way they wished. The information I obtained was added to the existing data to provide a more complete picture. Both participants expressed agreement with the themes and with my interpretation of the data. Eric had difficulty recalling some of the information he had shared in the first meeting and benefited from hearing direct quotes from the transcripts. In addition to verifying the themes, Scarlet was able to elaborate on her ideas and add to the data collected during the first interview.

Results

Four main themes emerged from the stories of Scarlet and Eric: self awareness, support networks, a classroom context in which students with learning disabilities are supported, and skills and strategies. In addition, the importance of perseverance became evident in the comments of the participants.

Self Awareness

Both Scarlet and Eric feel that the first year of reintegration is the most difficult. Scarlet says *I didn't do very good last year probably because it was my first year back to a regular classroom.* She explains that reintegration is like learning to play the flute. *At the beginning I had trouble making a sound but now, every time I blow one it just comes out.* She goes on in the second interview to say, *I know the flute and coming from a LD program is totally different yet it's also kind of the same because playing the flute...first you...like when you first start, you don't know how but the teacher usually will tell you that it takes time and you have to practice and that's pretty much just the same as coming from a LD program....*

Eric feels that the work is harder in the regular classroom and that he doesn't always have the background information that he needs to be successful, adding that the focus in the learning disabilities class had been on *reading and stuff like that.* He notes a difference in the amount of help he received in the learning disabilities program as compared to the regular classroom. *In learning disabilities it's more easy because the teacher helps you more*

because she knows you have a problem with it, and in the other grades the teacher doesn't know you have a problem so she doesn't know she has to help you a lot.

Self-awareness is an important aspect of both Eric's and Scarlet's experiences. They speak of their confidence getting a boost in the regular classroom. This is most often associated with getting a considerable amount of work done or doing well on a test or assignment. Scarlet notes, *...I got two better marks than her (Jill), two better marks, and that I felt really good because she was just an all A's student and I was like two A's and I just went, "wow", I can do that cause I understand and when I do need help, Jill still helps me.*

Eric talks about math, a subject he appears to struggle in, *...I got like four or five pages done in less than an hour and we had two hours to do our math. So I got at least seven pages done in that whole time. And that was like my most I've done ever.*

Scarlet relates that she has changed as a learner in a regular classroom setting. She identifies such factors as knowing what kinds of things distracted her, *I pay more attention most of the time lately and I usually ignore other people*; the importance of being aware of her needs within the classroom, *...it's like a reading period every Thursday and pretty often I come down and I ask the teacher what some words are or I didn't understand the sentence at all, and stuff like that;* her support network, and examples of ways she copes with the work load, *Yeah, and I'm going to call another one of my friends to help me out because actually one of my friends is coming over on Friday and she's bringing some homework..*

Eric notes that he does best in subjects that he is interested in.*When things are really interesting, then I feel I can do really good and when things aren't that interesting, then I don't do very good.* Like Scarlet, Eric also mentions an awareness of the things that distract him; *Well in my classroom kids like to make jokes and some kids aren't very good in class cause they like to be funny and in trouble and stuff, so that catches my attention;* the importance of his support network, and what he does when he is stuck, *When I'm stuck,*

the first thing I do is try to solve it myself, if I can't do that when I'm in the classroom I go to the teacher or my mom or my sister ....

Support Network

As Eric and Scarlet speak of their experiences and successes, the importance of a support network becomes evident. Both describe how they receive support from family and friends. Scarlet speaks more often and in more detail about the support she receives from her teachers. *I went to the teacher and every now and then when she sees this weird look on my face, she knows - "oh oh, she needs help". So she just comes over and explains it.* She compares the support she gets from teachers and friends to the ratio of land to water on Earth, *Teachers help me the most, but it's like 30% of my friends...it's like land and water.*

Eric feels that his family is the most significant group in his support network. When *I did have homework and I didn't know how to do it very good, I always asked my mom to help me. If my Mom doesn't get a question or something that's really hard... then my sister helps me out.*

Classroom Context

The regular classroom context plays a significant role in the reintegration for both students. This learning situation provides both successes and challenges. Scarlet notes that the pacing of instruction in the regular classroom is much faster, both in terms of the verbal delivery of information and the amount of notes that are given on the board. *I didn't have a clue what she (the teacher) was saying, I didn't understand. But I guess it was just because I was used to people going a little slower. After a few months I got used to the pace.* Scarlet adds that it makes her feel better to know that there are times that her classmates also experience difficulty keeping up or understanding what is said. Eric agrees that the pacing is faster in the regular classroom and that it is a challenge to keep up, especially during the first year.

The willingness to advocate for their own learning needs is clearly an important factor. Two types of advocacy are evident in the stories of Scarlet and Eric. The first is their

willingness and confidence to tell their teacher(s) that they have a learning disability. The second involves their ability to ask their teacher(s) for help when they need it, and/or to ask for accommodations that will help them to be more successful, such as being allowed to copy another student's notes.

Scarlet believes it is important that her teachers know she has a learning disability and she is willing to let them know this in order to receive the help she needs. *Yes, so then they know whenever there are subjects that I don't understand or I have a problem with, they can help me out more. So after the class is working on it, they can always come over and they say it over or say it a different way so I can understand it better.* In contrast, Eric makes his decision to let a teacher know about his learning disability based on whether or not he feels the teacher will help him more often or not. *In grade four and five I did tell the teacher* (about his learning disability) *but in grade six I don't. Just I felt like Mrs. D. would help me more often that Ms. S. and Ms. P. would.* He adds that when he does let them know, he is able to offer suggestions as to how they can best help him be successful, such as repeating instructions more than once if he doesn't get them the first time.

The second type of advocacy, being able to ask for help when it is needed, is an important consideration for both students. Eric states; *Well, if I have a question that's tough, then I ask the teacher.* He adds his perception that *Sometimes she's too busy to answer questions anyway.* When I ask what the teacher was busy with, Eric responds that she is busy with other students. Scarlet indicates that asking for help has been easier in her second year of reintegration. *I can go to the teacher now - every now and then I just feel like I'm in LD again and I can just go, and "Like I don't understand," and they tell me why and I'm like OK!*

Both Eric and Scarlet acknowledge that asking for help is OK. Scarlet goes as far as to say that she likes asking for help. *It feels good that they* (the teachers)*can help me out and I can understand it and I'm pretty sure that's how they feel that they can help me understand things. I just like it. It feels good.* Eric is more pragmatic in his response. *It*

doesn't really bother me, everybody has to have help one day or another. I ask and she helps me out or she doesn't and that's that , I guess...I kind of figure it out myself most of the time. Scarlet says that asking questions is easier in some classes than it is in others. For her, the deciding factor is the teacher's attitude towards being asked; *Yeah, depends on what teacher because some teachers they're a lot stricter and say, 'Weren't you paying attention?' and you were, it's just that you don't understand how they actually did it.* and their willingness to explain the material, *...cause our first teacher, he would just:..he'd give us the answer for the question so we didn't learn anything, that's why my mark went way down, but after...well before Christmas we have a different teacher and he would actually explain one way to do it and if you didn't understand...like if you say, "oh, OK," but you didn't really understand, he would know so he'd come back and do it a different way.*

Scarlet also talks about the teacher's ability to recognize when she is having difficulty and to respond. *Teachers explain it so I can understand and because every now and then they can tell that I'm puzzled and so they pretty much all figured out now when I get puzzled so they come over and talk to me.*

Skills and Strategies

During the interview, Eric and Scarlet talk about the skills they believe help them to be successful in the regular classroom. For both students, the most important are listening and study skills. Scarlet talks about how *I think my listening skills have got better.* Eric notes that he wishes he had *started back where I had listened more instead of fooling around because...you don't listen to the teacher you don't get it.*

Both Eric and Scarlet continue to need support in the area of study skills. Scarlet relies on her parents to help ensure that she is making the most of her study time, *...if I'm getting a snack like I do every day after school, if I tell them I'm having a test today, the next day or something, they go into my bag and find my books and they're like, "OK Scarlet sit down," and I'm like, "oh no, not again". They do it every time.* She also gets together with friends to complete assignments and study. Eric relies on his family as well.

Like last year I had some trouble with my math and my mom helped me out and my sister helped me out with my math too and social studies and a whole bunch of things I didn't get much.

Scarlet adds a third skill that she feels is paying off for her–goal setting. Since *most of my classes are talking about goals, I set my goals to pay attention, try and make the best things I can and do my best in my work.* She goes on to say that she reminds herself of her goals by putting little yellow stickies on the tabs on the front of her binder. She also uses this system to remind her of other things she needs to do or remember.

Discussion

Eric and Scarlet are eager to share their stories. Both students believe they are successful in the regular classroom and feel that they have important information to share about reintegration. They respond to questions frankly, using the informal language of their age group. At no time did I get the impression that they were trying to come up with the answers they thought I wanted to hear.

Eric and Scarlet are confident learners. Both acknowledge the pressures of the regular classroom. It is hard, they say, but they are confident that they can handle the pressure and be successful. Both students identify attention, listening skills, and study skills, as areas they need to work on, and they identify ways in which they have made an effort to improve their skills in these areas.

Having a support network is important to both Scarlet and Eric. Scarlet trusts teachers and believes that they are ready and willing to help her. She lets them know about her learning disability and feels comfortable asking them questions when she doesn't understand or needs extra help. Scarlet's parents are also a part of her support network. They assist her with homework, particularly when it comes to structuring her study time.

Eric has not developed that same degree of trust in teachers. He chooses the teachers he tells about his learning disability and asks questions mainly if he believes that the teacher will have the time to help him. Eric relies more on his family to support him. His mom and

sister play an important role in helping him with his homework and ensuring he understands new concepts.

Friendships are important to Eric and Scarlet. Upon their return to the regular classroom, both students expanded their social network to include students who do not have a learning disability. They maintain friendships with students from the learning disabilities program, however, they seek out and include other students as friends as well. In doing this, Scarlet and Eric have chosen not to identify themselves solely by their learning disability. They have been able to interact with peers in a context that is different and less protected than the one they experienced in the learning disabilities program. By not hanging on to that part of their educational past they are more fully participating in the regular school experience. By observing their non-learning disabled friends, Scarlet and Eric gain insight into what makes other students successful learners.

As learners, Scarlet is pro-active in ensuring her success while Eric takes a more passive approach. Both students recognize that, in the learning disabilities program, teachers were more likely to give them assistance without them having to ask for it. To be successful in the regular classroom requires a conscious decision to ask questions and seek help as needed. Scarlet asks a lot of questions. She also believes that because her teachers know she has a learning disability they are able to tell when she is puzzled or doesn't understand, and will provide her with the help she needs without her having to ask.

Eric does not ask his teachers a lot of questions. He acknowledges that he turns to them for help if he is stuck but that most of the time he relies on himself. He does not share Scarlet's optimistic view that teachers feel good about being able to help a student understand concepts and ideas.

Both students identify situations when they chose not to ask their teachers questions. Eric doesn't ask when he believes his teacher is too busy with other students to help him. Scarlet sees no benefit in asking when she knows that the teacher will simply give

her the answer rather than explaining how to get it or when the teacher will suggest that she wasn't paying attention during the lesson.

Overall, Scarlet is the more successful student. Aside from maintaining higher marks, she is more optimistic, more confident and enjoys the challenge of being in the regular classroom. Scarlet trusts her teachers and believes that learning is a win-win situation for her and for them.

Through their stories, Scarlet and Eric provide us with insight into some of the important characteristics of students who are able to reintegrate successfully into the regular classroom. Their experiences illustrate the importance of an optimistic outlook toward learning. Both students approach the challenges of the regular classroom with a positive attitude. Eric and Scarlet are confident that they will be successful in the regular classroom. They know it's hard but they don't doubt their ability to handle the pressure.

Scarlet's and Eric's experiences suggest that students who reintegrate successfully must be able to identify the areas in which they do well. They must also be prepared to identify those areas or skills they need to work on and be willing to focus on these areas. By expanding their social network to include students without learning disabilities, Scarlet and Eric allow themselves to more fully experience the social and academic opportunities of the regular classroom. They are able to learn from their peers and use what they learn to help themselves become more successful learners.

Finally, Scarlet and Eric take responsibility for their own learning. They acknowledge that the learning disabilities program provided them with a level of support not found in the regular classroom. They recognize that the regular classroom demands that they be more independent. Both students respond to that reality by developing a repertoire of strategies they can use to ensure they keep up with their mainstream classmates. Although they use it to a different degree, a key strategy both Scarlet and Eric use is asking for help when they need it. Whether the questions be directed at teachers, peers, or parents,

Eric and Scarlet know that it is important they understand what they are learning, as they are learning.

Concluding Comments

The first year of reintegration is the most critical. It is important that students experience success during this key year. Like Scarlet and Eric said, it's hard at first but it gets easier. It appears both students left the learning disabilities program with the skills and attitude necessary to be successful in the mainstream. They were able to adjust to the change in context, from classes in which help was often offered before it was asked for, to classes in which being able to ask for help is an essential skill. Scarlet and Eric believe they can be successful outside the context of the learning disabilities program and are able to leave the program behind them as they reintegrate, but take with them the skills and strategies they learned. Neither student mentions a need to return or a longing for what they had had in the learning disabilities program.

Within the context of their success, Scarlet and Eric talk about situations which make it difficult to do what they needed to do, for example, asking for help. Teachers who are perceived as equating asking for help with not paying attention, or who offer the answers rather than explanations of how to get the answers, make asking for help more difficult. Both Scarlet and Eric find that teachers who choose to lecture, accompanying their lectures with copious notes, are difficult to follow and to understand. While both these students are successful in spite of these challenges, their experience suggests teachers who receive students from the learning disabilities program need to be knowledgeable about the characteristics of students with learning disabilities. For example, recognizing that these students may need to have things explained different ways will help receiving teachers modify their instructional styles. Scarlet's and Eric's experiences also suggest that students need strategies for adjusting to varying teaching styles. Such information could be shared as part of the student's file or through a transition support person who could facilitate a successful transition experience for both the student and the receiving teacher(s).

The role of transition support in the successful reintegration of students like Scarlet and Eric, is clearly supported in the literature (Fuchs et al., 1995; Vaughn & Schumm, 1995; Collins, 1993; Fuchs, Fuchs, & Fernstrom, 1992, 1993; George & Lewis, 1991). These studies point to the need for making consulting services available to receiving teachers, the importance of ongoing professional development, and the value of developing and revising curriculum and instruction that meet the needs of all students.

With the current underfunding of education, additional transition support is seen as costly. Although transition support provides long term benefits by keeping reintegrated students in the mainstream rather than returning to, or remaining in, more costly special education programs, it is often overlooked as educators struggle with more short term solutions to budgetary restraints.

Vaughn and Schumm (1995) point to the importance of putting the needs of the students first. Students leaving segregated programs need strategies for dealing with the new demands of the mainstream classroom such as a faster pace of instruction and different instructional styles. Scarlet and Eric show us that coping with these changes takes time and persistence. They point to self-awareness, confidence, a support network, and a willingness to ask for help, as being key factors in their success in the regular classroom. These are factors that are not directly addressed in the current literature, which tends to focus on teachers and instruction.

While the research demonstrates the role of cognitive strategies in allowing students with learning disabilities to be autonomous and active learners (Ellis, 1993; Mulcahy, 1991; Wong, 1987), Scarlet and Eric did not talk specifically about the strategies they use in the mainstream classroom that help them be successful. It is not clear why this is the case: hopefully it is because they have internalized the strategies they were taught in the learning disabilities program and no longer see them as something separate that they bring to their learning.

This study looked only at the students' perspective of reintegration. However, everyone involved: parents, teachers, and administrators, has a vested interest in making reintegration a success. Scarlet and Eric are successful and this study identifies self awareness, a support network, a classroom context in which asking for help is encouraged, advocacy, and skills and strategies such as listening and goal setting, as some of the reasons why. Not all students may be as confident or approach their reintegration as positively. Not all students will encounter teachers as supportive as those of Scarlet and Eric. Special educators have a responsibility to ensure that their students are prepared to re-enter the mainstream. They need to help students develop skills in areas such as advocacy, self-awareness, listening, and goal setting. Mainstream educators then need to create an accepting and supportive environment so reintegrating students are able to use the skills and strategies they bring with them.

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Table 1

Interview Guide

1. What are the times when you feel you are doing really well? (specific examples) Does that happen a lot?
2. What are the times when you feel you are not doing well? (specific examples)
3. Who helps you with your learning? How often?
4. How do they help you?
5. What is it like for you, getting help in class?
6. What helps you with your learning?
7. What doesn't help you learn in this setting?
8. What do you do when you're stuck (academically or socially)?
9. What advice would you give to students who are coming back to a regular classroom after having been in a learning disabilities program?

Supplementary Interview Guide

1. What did you bring with you from the learning disabilities class that has helped you in the regular classroom?
2. Is there anything you wish you had learned or known before you came back to the regular classroom?

Connecting Statement

Study one examines the experience of two students who are successfully reintegrated into the mainstream. Their stories suggest a number of factors that play a role in this success. These include self-awareness, a classroom context that encourages the asking of questions and accommodates for the special needs of students with learning disabilities, the students' willingness to advocate for themselves, and skills and strategies including listening and goal setting.

While this study gives us direction in terms of ensuring students are well-prepared when they re-enter the mainstream, it leaves questions as to why the experience of reintegration is unsuccessful for some students. Similar in format to study one, study two attempts to answer these questions by looking at the stories of two students who were unsuccessful in their reintegration experience.

Reintegration: When the Challenge is too Much

Educators are being challenged to rethink special education services to students with learning disabilities. Baker and Zigmond (1995) point to a movement to "abandon pull-out, diagnostic-prescriptive skill building, and to return students more completely to general education settings while delivering whatever specially designed instruction is needed within the confines of the general education class" (p. 163). Looking at six sites providing inclusive education for ten students with learning disabilities, Baker and Zigmond conclude that these students are receiving a very good general education. They note the willingness of each of the schools to recognize the need to improve services for students with learning disabilities and to organize a program of special education services that allows these students to participate in the educational program offered to all students. Implications for educational policy and personnel preparation are discussed, including the economic feasibility of inclusion and the ability of novice special education teachers to fulfill the role of coteacher, coplanner and consultant.

Vaughn and Schumm (1995) examine what they call the "responsible inclusion" of students with learning disabilities. They define responsible inclusion as "the development of a school-based education model that is student centered and that bases educational placement and service provision on each individual student's needs" (p. 265). They view responsible inclusion as a continuum of services. The focus is the effective procedures and outcomes that reflect appropriate instructional practices for each child with disabilities, rather than the place in which the child is educated. They identify nine key components of responsible inclusion:

- putting the needs of the student first,
- teachers choosing to participate in inclusive classrooms,
- the provision of adequate resources for inclusive classrooms,
- the development of models which are then implemented at the school-based level,
- the maintenance of a continuum of services,

- ongoing evaluation of the service delivery model,
- ongoing professional development,
- the development of a philosophy of inclusion by teachers and other key personnel, and
- the development and refinement of curricula and instruction that meet the needs of all students.

Fuchs, Fuchs, and Fernstrom (1992) identify three factors which they feel act as barriers to mainstreaming. The first factor is the attitude of mainstreaming teachers. These researchers believe that the importance of this factor is often overplayed. The second factor identified is that skills taught in more restrictive settings are often not crucial to adaptation in other least restrictive environments. Finally, they identify the failure of students to transfer skills from the restrictive setting to the mainstream as the third and most important factor.

Reasons for the failure to transfer skills from one setting to another are linked to the differences between special and regular education settings (Fuchs, Fernstrom, Reeder, Bowen, & Gilmor, 1992). They note that the instruction in resource rooms tends to differ in both content and format from that of regular education classes. As well, instructional materials are often specialized, student groupings tend to be smaller, and the use of reinforcements is higher. These differences, they add, have been implemented purposefully to promote the efficient acquisition of skills. While this is what makes special education "special," it is also what most likely interferes with the transfer of skills across settings.

The Learning Disabilities Association of America released a position paper in 1993 that speaks to the issue of the full inclusion of students with learning disabilities in the regular education classroom. Although the paper acknowledges that regular education classrooms can benefit many students with learning disabilities, it cautions that there are a number of students with learning disabilities who may need alternative instructional environments, teaching strategies and/or material that cannot and will not be provided within the context of a regular classroom placement. Decisions regarding the educational placement of students must be made on an individual basis rather than on administrative

convenience or budgetary considerations. The cooperative effort of educators, parents, and, when appropriate, the student, is essential in any decision making process.

Reintegration of Students with Learning Disabilities

A key idea in the literature on reintegrating students with learning disabilities is transition planning. The idea of planning for transitions is also found in the literature on students' transitions across critical education stages. Communication between the sending and receiving sites, critical in any transition plan, is the common thread that runs through both areas of research. All of the education partners: sending and receiving teachers, parents, and students, need to communicate in order to facilitate a successful transition.

O'Shea (1994) points to three critical issues that must be addressed in any transition across critical education stages: preparing students and families for the transition, linking the sending and receiving environments, and facilitating the students' access to and participation in the receiving environment. She notes that transition activities require long-term considerations and service coordination and advocates for the communicating of best practice ideas between the sending and receiving teachers. Like O'Shea, Fowler (1988) points to the importance of communication between sites, the involvement of parents, and students' access to the receiving environment as being critical to the successful transition of students from early intervention settings to elementary school.

There is limited research in the area of reintegrating students with learning disabilities into the regular classroom setting. The studies which do exist tend to look primarily at the reintegration of students from resource room settings to regular classroom settings. Two studies were found that explore reintegration of students from special education classes. One of these focuses exclusively on students with learning disabilities. The other study has a more general focus on students with disabilities.

George and Lewis (1991) outline a four-phase process for reintegrating students into the mainstream. Their process is one that allows teachers to make data-based decisions about students' readiness to move to a less restrictive setting. It also helps to provide a

positive, fluid transition. The four phases are: long range planning, pre-exit activities, the transition, and follow-up and evaluation. Phase one, long-range planning, uses an individual education plan (IEP). It allows special education teachers to develop behavioural and academic goals and programs to ensure the students develop the competencies necessary for succeeding in the mainstream. Phase two, pre-exit activities, teaches students the necessary skills to succeed in new, less restrictive setting. The steps in this phase are: assessing the less restrictive setting, using routines from the less restrictive setting in the special class setting to give students practice with those routines, and assessing student readiness. Phase three, the transition, involves preparing the teaching staff and the students' parents for a change in placement. Phase four is student follow-up and evaluation. Also key to this process is the scheduling of consultative services for the receiving teacher. It can be on a regular or as-needed basis.

Fuchs, Fuchs, and Fernstrom (1992, 1993) examine the reintegration of students with learning disabilities on a case-by-case basis. The study evaluates a five-month effort to prepare 47 students with disabilities for a successful move from resource room to regular classroom math instruction. Preparation for transition includes the use of "transenvironmental programming" (TP) (Anderson-Inman, 1981) and curriculum-based measurement (CBM) (Deno, 1985). Findings indicate that students in the experimental groups, who are receiving TP or CBM or both, have a more positive attitude about leaving special education, more confidence about doing well in mainstream math, a conviction that they had learned more, a belief that they are perceived by their teachers as better students, and less worry about math than their nonhandicapped lower achieving peers. Teacher assigned grades were found to corroborate the students' perceptions.

In a second study, Fuchs, Fuchs, and Fernstrom (1995) evaluate the short-term and long-term effects of the case-by-case reintegration process set out in their 1992 study. Follow-up, conducted one year later (in the last half of year two), found that of the 38 who were reintegrated during year one, 22 were still receiving math instruction in the regular

classroom. They were concerned about this low rate of return to the mainstream, given the considerable amount of assistance provided to both special and regular educators through inservice training, provision of instructional materials, and project staffs' collaboration with the teachers, and their direct work with the students. Findings point to the need for on-going intervention to sustain the progress made by students in special education.

The Reintegration Project reported by Collins (1993) attempts to gather information about the reintegration process and examine how students progress through the system after being in a congregated (segregated) setting. Practices which may be most effective in promoting positive reintegration are discussed based on feedback from receiving schools and information from parents. Data were collected from receiving teachers using a brief questionnaire, from parents using personal interview conducted over the phone, and from selected students using a student questionnaire administered in an interview format. Collins notes the difficulty in getting the students to respond to the open-ended question format of the questionnaire. She adds that the results of the questionnaire provides little additional information to what has already been gathered. Recommendations included the tracking of students reintegrating into community schools from congregated settings, and the continued provision of appropriate supports for students within the context of the community school. These findings echo those of Fuchs, Fuchs, and Fernstrom (1992, 1993), Fuchs et al. (1995), and George and Lewis (1991) in calling for continued support for students with learning disabilities, and the need to follow students as they move into and through the regular school system.

In a study looking at the perceptions of mainstreamed students with learning disabilities, Vaughn, Schumm, and Kouzekanani (1993) found that students with learning disabilities, who were mainstreamed into regular classrooms for more than 50% of the school day, prefer general education teachers who make adaptations and accommodate students' learning needs to those who do not.

Instructional Models

Researchers view the merging of special and regular education through co-teaching as a potential key to successful inclusion of students with learning disabilities. Walther-Thomas, Bryant, and Land (1996) state that cooperative teaching or "co-teaching" is one support model through which students with disabilities can achieve greater academic and social success. They note that "as school systems move toward more inclusive education programs for students with disabilities, comprehensive co-planning at the district, building, and classroom levels ensures that structurally sound frameworks will be provided to support these programs" (p. 263).

Wong (1996) presents a TEAM Model as an alternative for merging special and regular education. This model focuses on integrating students with moderate disabilities such as learning disabilities, emotional disorders, behaviour disorders, and/or mild mental retardation, into the regular classroom setting. Like co-teaching, the TEAM model is implemented through team teaching between the classroom teacher and the specialist teacher. In addition, the TEAM model requires both pull-out services to provide intensive remediation and the teaching of prerequisite skills essential for success in the integrated classroom.

Cognitive Strategy Instruction

Regardless of the instructional model used, it is critical that the instructional practices benefit all students, including those with learning disabilities. Research demonstrates that cognitive strategy instruction is an instructional practice which assists all students, including those with learning disabilities, to be more successful learners. Mulcahy (1991) focuses on the role of strategy instruction in developing autonomous learners. Wong (1987) discusses the positive effects metacognitive research has had on the teaching of students with learning disabilities. Like Mulcahy (1991), Wong advocates for the acquisition of metacognitive skills by students with learning disabilities as a means of

enabling them to become autonomous and active learners. Both researchers support the need for goal-directed self-regulation in students with learning disabilities.

Ellis (1993) advocates the integration of cognitive strategy instruction and content area instruction as a means of helping adolescents with learning disabilities generalize the knowledge and strategies that they learn. His model, Integrated Strategy Instruction (ISI) involves four phases of instruction: orienting, framing, applying and extending. It provides the basis upon which resource instruction and content area class instruction can become more integrative.

Summary of the Literature Review

The research on the reintegration and mainstreaming of students with learning disabilities points to the potential for success within the parameters of a collaborative effort between regular and special educators, and the availability of adequate resources. I found few studies addressing the reintegration of students with learning disabilities from segregated programs. The research on reintegration from the resource room to the regular classroom suggests that transitions within the context of a single school will increase the chance of success as collaboration is enhanced by proximity.

The Reintegration Program presented by Collins (1993) speaks to the need for tracking students who reintegrate and for the continued provision of resources in the regular classroom. It does not however, offer suggestions on how the segregated programs might put structures and procedures in place to help ensure the successful reintegration of their students. The four-step process developed by George and Lewis (1991) has potential to be adapted for use in reintegration from segregated programs to community schools.

The students in this study attend a school jurisdiction that has no formal transition plan or model in place. Students who reintegrate into the mainstream from the learning disabilities program may receive transition support and monitoring if the receiving school or teacher requests assistance although there is no funding agreement in place to do this. When this type of informal transition planning happens, the sending and receiving teachers may

meet to discuss the needs of the student and share effective strategies for working with the student. Typically, once the new school year has started, there is no formal communication between the sending and receiving teachers. Inservices on teaching student with learning disabilities are available to receiving teachers, but are not mandatory. Attendance at such inservices has declined over the last three years as professional development funds have declined.

Vaughn, Schumm, and Kouzekanani (1993) gathered students' perceptions about regular education teachers who make adaptations in their classrooms. This piece of research was the only one I found that considered the perspectives of the students with learning disabilities. More opportunities are necessary for these students to share their experiences with researchers.

This article presents the stories of April and Tom, two students with learning disabilities. Having received some of their education in a program for students with learning disabilities, both students reintegrated into regular classrooms. Finding it challenging they both returned to a learning disabilities program in order to be successful. As they talked about their successes and challenges, factors that determine the success of a reintegration experience began to emerge.

Method

Qualitative Methodology

The experience of reintegration is unique to each student. Their successes and the challenges they face reflect the similarities and differences of their individual experiences. A qualitative research method best allows the research to more fully explore the experiences of the students. Qualitative data-gathering procedures are more suited to "the diversity of 'multiple realities' one finds in a complex field situation" (Borg and Gall, 1989, p. 385).

I chose a qualitative approach that "provides a way of exploring lived-experience - the actuality of experience - from the inside rather than from the natural science perspective of observation and measurement" (Osborne, 1994, p.170). My research uses data sources

consisting of verbal accounts of personal experience obtained through interviews. Analysis consists of categorizing these personal experiences into meaningful structures and describing those structures.

Participants

I selected two participants for this study. Each shared their experience from the perspective of a student who reintegrated into the regular classroom and, due to the challenges they experienced, returned to the learning disabilities program. April and Tom are pseudonyms chosen by the students. They are both 18 year old in their second year of grade twelve.

Instrumentation

I developed an interview questionnaire to address the issues related to the students' experience of reintegration. As shown in Table 1, nine primary questions and two supplementary questions formed the final draft of the questionnaire. In addition, I used probing to clarify their responses and to encourage each of the students to expand on their responses and/or to give specific examples to illustrate their experiences.

Procedure

After approval by the Department of Education Psychology Ethics Review Committee, I selected my participants. Each student is designated learning disabled using the criteria established by their school district for admission into the learning disabilities program. They have completed a minimum of two years in a district learning disabilities site followed by a period of reintegration in a mainstream setting. Each student is now back in the learning disabilities program having found the mainstream classroom experience overwhelming.

I approached one district learning disabilities site to obtain names of students who had returned to the learning disabilities program after being reintegrated into the regular classroom. I made contact with this site through the administrator and we met so I could describe the purpose and design of the study. She then gave me the names of possible

participants. Based on the criteria set out previously I selected two participants from the list. I also asked for suggestions from the administrator regarding those students who would best be able to articulate their experiences in an interview.

As both participants were 18 years of age, I made initial contact directly with them by phone. I detailed the purpose and design of the study and answered any questions they had. I obtained verbal consent from each participant and arranged a meeting with them. Prior to the meeting, I gave each participant the same set of orienting instructions. These instructions explained the purpose of the study, provided participants with an idea of the kinds of experiences they would be asked to share during the interview, and assured them of the confidentiality of their responses. At the initial meeting, I obtained written consent from each participant.

The interviews were conducted at the high school the participants attended. The learning disabilities program provided space for each meeting. This space was a foyer area which opened onto two of the classrooms used by the program. While the door to each classroom was kept closed during the interviews there were a number of interruptions as teachers entered and exited the classrooms and school-wide announcements were made over the intercom. I anticipated that each interview would take approximately one hour to complete. This turned out to be an overestimation. In both cases the interviews were approximately 45 minutes in length.

I arranged a second meeting with each participant to go through the data analysis of the first interview and to confirm my interpretation of the data. Tom chose not to participate in the second meeting.

Data Analysis

I made a tape recording of the interviews and transcribed and read them several times to become more familiar with the experiences of the participants. I identified and coded patterns and themes which emerged from the data. I then studied the similarities and differences between the participants' stories. Themes which were present in both

participants' stories were identified, as were themes which were unique to each of them. I asked an assistant, not associated with the study, to read through the transcripts and provide insight into the themes I identified and the way I had coded the data within these themes. There were no disagreements in our discussion of the themes and the supporting data, however we clarified the ideas of passivity and perseverance.

I conducted the second interview with April at the school where I work. The purpose of the meeting was to check the faithfulness of my interpretations of April's experience. I went through each of the themes with April and asked her to verify the interpretation, clarify it, or add to it in any way she wished. I added the information to the existing data to provide a more complete picture. April agreed with the themes and with my interpretation of the data and was able to further elaborate on her ideas and add to the data collected during the first interview.

Results

April

April is an eighteen year old student completing her second year of grade twelve. She is an outgoing and friendly young woman who articulates her experience clearly and thoughtfully. April was educated in the learning disabilities program for two years beginning in grade three. She reintegrated for the first time in grade five and remained in the regular classroom until junior high. April re-entered the learning disabilities program in grade eight and remains in the program in high school. April receives some of her courses in the mainstream setting. It is this experience that she focuses on in the interviews. April provides an insight into the high school experience of reintegration which can be added to the experiences of the other participants.

April is a pro-active student who appears to do whatever she can to ensure her success as a learner. When she first reintegrated into the high school program April was scared. Her primary concern was that she would be asked to read out loud in class or that she would be asked to respond to a question in class. ...*the teachers like to get the students*

involved and get the students to read and it's just I think that was one of the scariest things is I was always afraid that I would have to read. ..If it's just kind of stuff I'm not really sure about, then I won't want to answer the question...If they ask me a question about whatever we're learning at the time, I'll be totally lost and I'll have no idea what to say. April was concerned that she would not be able to read well enough or that she would not understand the lesson well enough to answer questions. When a lesson involved concepts she did understand, April would raise her hand and volunteer an answer. It helped her feel more comfortable to know that some of the other students were also having trouble understanding at times.

When April tells her teachers that she has a learning disability, she feels that they are less likely to call on her in class. When they do, they tend to ask her questions that she is able to respond to. The teachers attempt to keep her involved in the class but not to put her under more stress than she can handle. ...*When we told them that we have a learning disability...they understood and...They still got us involved enough but didn't really pressure us to answer questions of whatever.* While accommodating her need to feel comfortable in class by reducing the pressure to contribute, April acknowledges that her teachers hold the same expectations for her as they hold for other students when it comes to assignments and projects; ...*But for assignments that you've been doing that you might do with a group or you might do with your notes and stuff like that, then I don't think they'll expect less, but I'm sure they'd expect just as much of me than with anyone else.*

April explains that projects, assignments and quizzes allow her to better demonstrate her understanding of concepts and learning than midterms and final exams do. Projects and assignments allow her to access her notes and to work with small groups who can explain things to her if she needs them to. *Projects and assignments I do better at cause it's like you have the information in your textbook or in your binder or whatever and sometimes you're in groups so you get help and people explain it to you - the assignments and stuff so I do...I do good at projects."* Quizzes, which rely on April's short-term

memory, cause her little difficulty. April does not fare as well on mid-terms and final exams. She finds it difficult to remember all the material presented over the longer time period. For April, it is like having to learn the material all over again. April's ability to retain material in her long term memory is a major concern for her. ...*When tests came, it was hard cause you have to study like almost start over again just trying to figure out and understand what you did before.* April uses exercise to deal with the stress. *I'll go for a run and just burn it all off. It helps. I feel it helps. The fresh air clears my mind.*

April enlists her support network to help her success at school. She tells her teachers about her learning disability. Once they know, they are able to provide her with the extra help she needs. This often takes the form of making sure she understands the lesson and taking the time to answer her questions and clarify homework assignments with her. *I took Bio 20 and it's a really hard course and I was in a regular class and my teacher knew that I have a learning disability and there was a friend of mine who also had a learning disability in class with me, and my teacher she'd always like...come up to us and say...after class, do you guys need help? We can help and so they helped a lot.* April tries to get help right after the teacher is finished instruction and then makes little notes to herself to help her later when she goes to do her homework. April also enlists the support of friends from the learning disabilities program who are now reintegrated. Whether it is moral support, study groups or homework partners, this support is important to April. *We'd just get together at lunch or after school or something and just kind of do our homework together or kind of explain to each other what something was...like an assignment or something.*

I ask April what skills she brought with her from the learning disabilities program that help her in the regular class. April identifies study skills and learning to ask questions as important skills she learned in the program. *"I think getting help...like learning to ask questions to the teachers and stuff, I don't know...like in the learning disabilities program, they teach you the proper way of studying and make sure you ask for questions and if you*

don't understand something and they kind of grind that into your head to ask questions." During the second interview April adds that she also learned notetaking skills and the importance of listening in the learning disabilities program.

April's idea of a teacher who helps students successfully reintegrate is one who involves the student with learning disabilities in ways that don't pressure him or her, and who takes the time to understand what is going on in the classroom for that student. *They helped by just...like they'd involved you in the class but not...they'd ask you questions, but sort of questions they knew you would know kind of think...just to keep you going in the class and keep you involved and just...they'd help you...just help you so you'd understand what's going on in the classroom and I think that's a big thing - if you don't understand, then it's hard.* April's advice to students who are reintegrating is to be prepared to spend a great deal of time studying and doing homework. She adds that they also need to ask questions and to attend school every day.

April expresses the opinion that the learning disabilities program is easier than the regular classroom. She notes that there is a teacher and a program assistant to provide one-on-one assistance to the students. She explains that the pacing of instruction is slower and there is lots of time to complete homework during class time rather than at home. *I found that in the Learning Disabilities program, it's like easier because you have a lot of help from the teachers, like sometimes you have a teacher and then the teachers' assistant, so you have lots of help and it's good, but it's hard because once you leave that program and then you go in the regular class, it's like you're going the speed. I mean you have to totally keep up with all the other kids and it's hard because you're not used to...you're used to going so slow...taking your time and then all of a sudden you have to like go through these courses and lessons and stuff like that so fast and it's just ...it makes it difficult sometimes.*

April believes that this tendency to provide assistance and adjust pacing is a liability for students leaving the learning disabilities program. She feels that the segregated program should enforce stricter deadlines for assignments and that more responsibility should be

placed on students to complete assignments at home independently, rather than in the classroom; *...she gives us lots of time to do our homework and stuff like that, but...it's nice of her to do but I think she should kind of say OK, now this homework's due this day, has to be done and then we're starting on our next lesson instead of giving us two or three classes to do our homework and just sit there the whole class and do our homework.*

April mentions that she is applying for admission to a program offered by her local community college. She expresses her concern that, because the learning disabilities class doesn't push as hard as the regular class, she may not be able to keep up with the academic demands of college. *..I almost think I'm not prepared for college or whatever. I know college is a lot harder...it's a lot harder than high school and learning disabilities, it's so laid back and...I'm just afraid once I get into college I'm going to be swamped.*

Tom

Tom is an eighteen year old student who is also in his second year of grade twelve. Educated in the learning disabilities program since elementary school, Tom talks frankly about his reintegration experience in the high school setting. He makes it clear more than once during the interview, that upon reintegrating he made a conscious decision to have what he called a "normal" experience. He wanted to experience what a "normal" high school was like and to see what he could do on his own.

Tom did not have a successful reintegration experience. From his first day back he missed the one-on-one he experienced in the learning disabilities program. He states that he didn't know anything about the teacher and that he *just took things as they go*. Tom explains that he never felt comfortable in the regular classroom setting. He says that he doesn't remember ever doing well during reintegration and that nothing turned out successfully for him.

Reintegrated in three subjects: math, social studies, and art, Tom dropped his math class shortly into the term. He explains that he started having problems because the teacher just wrote on the board and didn't explain anything. *...It was just to much, the teacher just*

totally wrote on the board, didn't explain anything, all I knew was there's an "X" here, there's a "Y" there kind of thing and I just flipped out;and I ended up dropping the class.... He went on to say that he didn't know anyone in the class and that the teacher came across as unapproachable. Social studies went better. Tom's best friend was in the class and provided him with moral and academic support. *...It was good because my best friend was in the class at the time, so he would help me a lot and I would just be afraid to go up and ask the teacher cause nobody really went up and asked questions really.* Tom explains that his friend assisted him in finding answers for assignments and quizzes and also helped him cope with the tension he was feeling in the class.

Tom has considerable artistic ability *...art's almost a breeze for me*, and his binder is covered with pictures he has drawn. He doesn't, however, see art as part of the school-based experience. Art was just art; he separated it out from the academic subjects and is unable to associate it with any school-related success he might have had during his reintegration. Tom acknowledges that he received positive feedback in art for a painting he had done. He said that he didn't think that the project he had done was anything special, but the praise made him feel good.

Tom was able to pass the assignments and quizzes in class because of the help of his friend. His friend showed him where the answers were and Tom would copy them out. He doesn't appear to consider this cheating. Tom suggests that because he was getting passing scores on assignments, his teachers never suspected he had academic problems. It wasn't until exam time that Tom experienced significant problems. He relates one episode in social studies in which the teacher presents a lesson, using what Tom describes as a mind map or web. Tom is familiar with mind maps and thought that he understood the content of the lesson. However, when faced with the actual exam, Tom could see no relationship between the material he thought he knew and the content of the exam. *So I thought, I understand it –it started making sense like who's first and then who came second kind of*

thing and I thought I started understanding it and then we go to a test or something and I just...it's like all the questions an stuff has nothing to do with what I thought I knew.

Tom appears to be a passive learner. He chooses not to let his teachers and friends know about his learning disability. *When I went back, I wanted to try...I wanted to almost forget that I had a learning disability and try to be normal and try to not really tell anybody and see what I can do on my own kind of thing and it just...it was really tough.* He relies on his friend for moral support and to help him find answers for assignments. Tom also reports that he had access to a school counsellor but that he did not choose to talk with her about how things were going or ask her for help. At one point in the interview he acknowledges that there are always people you can go to for help, but that he never really did - he prefers to keep things to himself.

Tom dropped out of school three months into the reintegration experience. He explains that *after not understanding for awhile, you just start to not care much anymore, I give up kind of thing*. When I ask if he would do things differently if he was to go through his reintegration experience again, Tom says no, that if he could do it again he still wouldn't tell people about his learning disability. He goes on to say that, although he is glad he had the experience, if he was given the opportunity to reintegrate again he wouldn't do it. He feels that dropping out was the best thing he could have done because it forced him to assume more responsibility for his own life. Eventually, he chose to return to school and he reentered the learning disabilities program.

When I ask what advice he could offer students who were reintegrating, he recommends that they have a study period in which someone is available to offer help. This person would act as a tutor and assist students in working through the assignments they receive in the classroom. Tom also says that students need to know that asking the teacher questions to get things explained is okay. He adds that for him, knowing people in the class makes it easier for him to ask questions. His perception of the teacher also affects whether or not he asks questions. His math teacher, who Tom describes as *kind of mean* with an

either you know it or you don't and there was no in between attitude, was harder to ask questions of than his social studies teacher who came across as friendly and willing to help. Tom goes on to say that he feels the learning disabilities program provided him with some skills and strategies that were useful to him in the regular classroom. These include an understanding of how to take notes and how to plan and write an essay. He notes that it is important to figure out little tricks you can use to do things faster.

Tom knew that the regular classroom was going to be tough. He feels the biggest challenge was adjusting to a totally different way of teaching. He much prefers and responds to the style of teaching in the learning disabilities program in which the teaching is one-on-one and you personally know your teacher. He describes the relationship as being like a friendship and later says that *in way you're like one of their kids. They overly care about you.* For Tom, the *one-on-one makes it easier to talk and to have things explained.* The relationship makes *you trust the teachers more and you learn more from them*, unlike the regular classroom where the *teachers just stand up in front of the classroom and tell you in front of the whole class. Other teachers* (mainstream classroom) *you don't even want to learn from because they are no fun.*

Discussion

April and Tom approach reintegration into the mainstream high school program in very different ways. April takes a more proactive approach, enlisting the help of her teachers and friends. Tom is more passive, choosing to do it on his own. Both students believe that the support of the learning disabilities program makes them more successful learners. Each share their thoughts on why the learning disabilities program is successful for them. April talks about how the very aspects of the program that makes it successful are also its weaknesses.

April's biggest fear during reintegration is that she will be asked to read out loud in class or be asked to respond to a question to which she does not know the answer. She lacks the confidence to handle this pressure. One way she deals with this is by letting her

teachers know about her learning disability. She believes it is important that her teachers have this knowledge. She explains that they often respond to knowing about her learning disability by not putting her on the spot in class or by involving her in ways that they think she can handle. While her teachers make life easier for her in this respect, April goes on to add that they do not change their expectations of her where assignments are concerned.

Projects and assignments are manageable for April. She is able to use the support of friends, working with them in study groups or asking them for help when she doesn't understand something. Exams are another issue. April explains how difficult they are for her and how hard it is for her to remember everything she has learned over the long term. April tries to compensate for her memory problems by asking her teachers to clarify directions and expectations and then writing notes to herself for when she gets home. Although she did not admit it, references to her frustration with homework and longer-term assignments indicate that April experiences difficulty organizing herself and her study time. This, together with her apparent memory problems, make exams and homework assignments difficult.

During her interview for admission to a program at a local community college, April chose to tell the interview panel that she has a learning disability. She believes that it will give them a sense of who she is and also a better understanding of why she feels she is a good candidate for the program for the Teacher Assistant program which she is applying. She believes that her own school experiences will make her more understanding and better able to help other students with a similar disability.

Tom took a more passive approach to his reintegration experience. He elected not to tell anyone about his learning disability. He wanted to do it on his own. Tom also tends to externalize his problems. He rarely asks for help, often blaming others. For example, he complained that his math teacher made asking difficult, and it was because of his instructional style that Tom did not understand the concepts presented. When Tom did ask

for help, it was because he knew people in the class and he perceived that the teacher would be willing to help him.

Tom finds exams difficult. Often what he thinks he understands about the content of the course does not match the content being tested on the exam. This is very frustrating for him; he often feels like giving up. Tom reports he did okay on quizzes and in class assignments. In the regular stream, his best friend would often show him where the answers were in the text so that Tom could copy them out. Like April, Tom acknowledges that his organizational skills are weak and quite likely contribute to the academic difficulties he experiences.

Neither student sought feedback from their teachers. Both asked questions to clarify information or to gain further explanation on course material but at no point did they ask questions for the purpose of getting feedback on how they were doing, what they were doing well, or what they could be doing different or better. Tom gave an example of receiving unsolicited positive feedback from a teacher in art. While it made him feel good, he seemed unable to use this feedback to modify his attitude or replicate his success.

April and Tom rely on the learning disabilities program to get through high school. Interestingly, both students view the reason for their success in the program quite differently. Tom depends on the one-on-one nature of the program for his success. He relies on the "overly" caring nature of the teachers and teaching assistants to allow him to trust and therefore to learn. He likes the idea that there is always someone there who can explain things to him and guide him through his work. In his opinion, this is the downfall of the regular high school program. There is limited opportunity for one–on–one interaction in the mainstream classroom and, for the most part, students are required to fend for themselves. Left without the extensive support of the learning disabilities program, Tom was unable to cope in the regular stream.

April sees the increased level of support provided by the learning disabilities program as a liability. While her continued reliance on this support indicates that it is

essential if she is to achieve in school, April explains that it is this very support that leaves her ill-prepared for the regular classroom. Her biggest challenges in the regular classroom were the tighter timelines and the expectation that she complete more work on her own time. In the learning disabilities program she is used to additional class time for working on assignments, a slower pace of instruction, and more one-on-one assistance from the teacher and the teacher assistant.

The learning disabilities program has not been successful in equipping either Tom or April with the skills and work habits necessary for success in the regular classroom. The very strength of the learning disabilities program is also its weakness–the students' dependence on continuous support leaves them unprepared for the independence demanded in the regular classroom.

Both students knew that reintegration would be challenging. Each mention learning strategies they had brought with them including: how to take notes and how to study for tests. They both appear to know what they need to do, but neither of them appear to follow through. Both students struggle with exams. Neither mentions asking for special accommodations on tests and assignments that could help them do better. Neither indicate that they sought feedback from their teachers about how they were doing or what they could have been doing differently.

Tom's and April's stories raise a number of issues for consideration. The first issue to consider is, at what point do we begin to handicap students with a placement in the learning disabilities program? Both April and Tom spent a number of years in the program prior to reintegrating. Both acknowledge that they benefit from, and indeed need, the additional attention and assistance they receive in the learning disabilities program. They find the demands for independence in the regular classroom overwhelming. April and Tom lack confidence that they can respond to questions in class and both students look for ways to avoid pressure.

Perhaps it is unrealistic to expect students who have been in the learning disabilities program for much of their school experience to cope successfully in a regular classroom environment in high school. It is possible that, after a number of years in the learning disabilities program, they have become overly dependent on the program and all the extra assistance. In particular, Tom's experience suggests a lack of trust in teachers outside of the learning disabilities program. He does not believe the regular classroom teachers are willing to help him and he blames them for his difficulties coping with the increased academic demands.

The second issue to be considered is the importance of providing students with realistic feedback while they are in the learning disabilities program. Students need to understand the connection between their achievement and the amount of additional assistance they receive. The students must realize that that same degree of support will not be available to them in the regular classroom. They must take on more of the responsibility for their learning. They must identify sources of support that may benefit them in the regular classroom.

Both April and Tom rely primarily on the support of friends who have also been in the learning disabilities program. Neither made friends outside of this context. The result, in a sense, is that they never really left the learning disabilities program. It appeared to be an important part of their personal identity. While the support of friends who understand their learning disabilities is important, friends outside of that context could perhaps have allowed April and Tom to more fully participate in the regular classroom experience and to learn some of the valuable skills and strategies used by successful learners.

Neither April or Tom asks their regular classroom teachers for feedback on how they are doing. In the learning disabilities program, where instruction is delivered in a small group or in a one-on-one context, feedback can be provided on an ongoing basis. It is important that the students in this program be taught how to ask for and use feedback from

teachers. Furthermore, they need to develop strategies for modifying or changing their learning habits.

Establishing a support network is essential. Students need to be aware that a successful support network is wide-ranging, going beyond other students with learning disabilities. It needs to include teachers, friends, family and other school personnel, such as counsellors. Including non- learning disabled friends in a support network is a valuable way to become more integrated in the regular education context and to learn new strategies and skills.

A final issue raised by the stories of April and Tom is the need for transition support for students who are reintegrating. One of the reasons April and Tom were unsuccessful is because of what they didn't do, for example, seek and use feedback, ask for accommodations, and organize their time. Transition support would offer reintegrating students regular monitoring of their experience, such as, a once or twice weekly check-in. During the check-in, the transition support teacher can monitor students' progress, find out how well they are keeping up with assignments, note how often they are using the strategies they have been taught, find out what kind of feedback they have been getting from their teachers, and reinforce the skills and strategies they developed in the learning disabilities program. In addition, transition support can offer students positive feedback in those areas where they are doing well, and assist them in problem-solving when they run into difficulties.

Transition support has the potential to be a valuable part of a teacher's support network. Many teachers who receive students from the learning disabilities program are unsure of the characteristics, strategies, and potential learning needs that these students bring with them. A transition support teacher could provide receiving teachers with valuable insights into the strengths and needs of students with learning disabilities. They could offer suggestions for instructional strategies that would benefit not only the student with a learning disability but the other students in the class as well.

The role of transition support in increasing the chances of a successful reintegration experience for students like April and Tom is clearly supported in the literature (Collins, 1993; Fuchs et al., 1995; Fuchs, Fuchs & Fernstrom, 1992, 1993; George & Lewis, 1991; Vaughn & Schumm, 1995). These studies point to the need to make consulting services available to receiving teachers, the importance of ongoing professional development, and the value of developing and revising curriculum and instruction that meets the needs of all students.

With the current underfunding of education, additional transition support is seen as costly. Although transition support provides long term benefits by keeping reintegrated students in the mainstream rather than returning to, or remaining in, more costly special education programs, it is often overlooked as educators struggle with more short term solutions to budgetary restraints.

Vaughn and Schumm (1995) point to the importance of putting the needs of the students first. We need to ensure they have strategies for dealing with aspects of the mainstream classroom such as a faster pace of instruction and different instructional styles. The experiences of April and Tom suggest by what they did not do, a number of student centered factors to consider. These include: asking for feedback, asking for help, dealing with pressure, and facilitating the transfer the skills and strategies learned from the special education program to the mainstream setting.

While the research demonstrates the role of cognitive strategies in allowing students with learning disabilities to be autonomous and active learners (Ellis, 1993; Mulcahy, 1991; Wong, 1987), April and Tom did not talk specifically about using strategies in the mainstream classroom. Both identified strategies they learned in the learning disabilities program, such as how to take notes and how to study, however, it is not apparent that either followed through with using these strategies in the regular classroom.

Concluding Comments

As educators, our ultimate goal is for all students to have a successful education experience. That experience will look different for different students. For April and Tom, it took the form of the learning disabilities program in which each spent a significant portion of their school career. Both students experienced a degree of success in this context. However, the critical question that arises from their stories is, "Have we done April and Tom, and other students like them, a disservice by creating a dependency that leaves them ill-prepared for the demands of the regular classroom?" Were these students further handicapped because of the long-term segregated nature of the specialized program? If so, what are the long term implications of this dependency on any future education or career choices April and Tom might make?

The intent of this study was to record April's and Tom's perspectives of their reintegration experience. The stories of their teachers and other members of their support network were not sought. I believe April and Tom told their stories honestly and frankly. Further research would determine if April and Tom are unique in their experience or if other students from long-term learning disabilities programs have similar stories to share. Educators need to look at the issue of learner dependency and develop strategies for successfully reintegrating students into the regular stream before a level of dependency interferes with a successful transition.

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Table 1

Interview Guide

1. What were the times when you felt you were doing really well? (specific examples) Did that happen a lot?
2. What were the times when you felt you were not doing well? (specific examples)
3. Who helped you with your learning? How often?
4. How did they help you?
5. What was it like for you, getting help in class?
6. What helped you with your learning?
7. What didn't help you learn in this setting?
8. What did you do when you were stuck (academically or socially)?
9. What advice would you give to students who are coming back to a regular classroom after having been in a learning disabilities program?

Supplementary Interview Guide

1. What did you bring with you from the learning disabilities class that helped you in the regular classroom?
2. Is there anything you wish you had learned or known before you went back to the regular classroom?

Connecting Statement

Study one examines the experience of two students who are successfully reintegrated into the mainstream. Their stories suggest a number of factors that play a role in this success. These include: self-awareness, a classroom context that encourages the asking of questions and accommodates the learning needs of students with learning disabilities, the students' willingness to advocate for themselves, and skills and strategies including listening and goal setting.

Study two focuses on two students who were not successful in their reintegration experience. Their stories raise the issue of whether or not special needs programs create dependency. As well, their stories identify, by what these students did not do, factors that play a role in successful reintegration. These factors include: asking for and using feedback from teachers, establishing a support network which goes beyond other students with learning disabilities, and organizational skills.

Considering the findings in studies one and two, study three takes a look at the commonalties and idiosyncracies that exist between and among the four students. It then identifies the key issues raised by the comparisons and makes suggestions that educators could take to address these issues.

Reintegration: Comparing the experience

Educators are being challenged to rethink special education services to students with learning disabilities. Baker and Zigmond (1995) point to a movement to "abandon pull-out, diagnostic-prescriptive skill building, and to return students more completely to general education settings while delivering whatever specially designed instruction is needed within the confines of the general education class" (p. 163). Looking at six sites providing inclusive education for ten students with learning disabilities, Baker and Zigmond conclude that these students are receiving a very good general education. They note the willingness of each of the schools to recognize the need to improve services for students with learning disabilities and to organize a program of special education services that allows these students to participate in the educational program offered to all students. Implications for educational policy and personnel preparation are discussed, including the economic feasibility of inclusion and the ability of novice special education teachers to fulfill the role of coteacher, coplanner and consultant.

Vaughn and Schumm (1995) examine what they call the "responsible inclusion" of students with learning disabilities. They define responsible inclusion as "the development of a school-based education model that is student centered and that bases educational placement and service provision on each individual student's needs" (p. 265). They view responsible inclusion as a continuum of services. The focus is the effective procedures and outcomes that reflect appropriate instructional practices for each child with disabilities, rather than the place in which the child is educated. They identify nine key components of responsible inclusion:

- putting the needs of the student first,
- teachers choosing to participate in inclusive classrooms,
- the provision of adequate resources for inclusive classrooms,
- the development of models which are then implemented at the school-based level,
- the maintenance of a continuum of services,

- ongoing evaluation of the service delivery model,
- ongoing professional development,
- the development of a philosophy of inclusion by teachers and other key personnel, and
- the development and refinement of curricula and instruction that meet the needs of all students.

Fuchs, Fuchs, and Fernstrom (1992) identify three factors which they feel act as barriers to mainstreaming. The first factor is the attitude of mainstreaming teachers. These researchers believe that the importance of this factor is often overplayed. The second factor identified is that skills taught in more restrictive settings are often not crucial to adaptation in other least restrictive environments. Finally, they identify the failure of students to transfer skills from the restrictive setting to the mainstream as the third and most important factor.

Reasons for the failure to transfer skills from one setting to another are linked to the differences between special and regular education settings (Fuchs, Fernstrom, Reeder, Bowen, & Gilmor, 1992). They note that the instruction in resource rooms tends to differ in both content and format from that of regular education classes. As well, instructional materials are often specialized, student groupings tend to be smaller, and the use of reinforcements is higher. These differences, they add, have been implemented purposefully to promote the efficient acquisition of skills. While this is what makes special education "special," it is also what most likely interferes with the transfer of skills across settings.

The Learning Disabilities Association of America released a position paper in 1993 that speaks to the issue of the full inclusion of students with learning disabilities in the regular education classroom. Although the paper acknowledges that regular education classrooms can benefit many students with learning disabilities, it cautions that there are a number of students with learning disabilities who may need alternative instructional environments, teaching strategies and/or material that cannot and will not be provided within the context of a regular classroom placement. Decisions regarding the educational placement of students must be made on an individual basis rather than on administrative

convenience or budgetary considerations. The cooperative effort of educators, parents, and, when appropriate, the student, is essential in any decision making process.

Reintegration of Students with Learning Disabilities

A key idea in the literature on reintegrating students with learning disabilities is transition planning. The idea of planning for transitions is also found in the literature on students' transitions across critical education stages. Communication between the sending and receiving sites, critical in any transition plan, is the common thread that runs through both areas of research. All of the education partners: sending and receiving teachers, parents, and students, need to communicate in order to facilitate a successful transition.

O'Shea (1994) points to three critical issues that must be addressed in any transition across critical education stages: preparing students and families for the transition, linking the sending and receiving environments, and facilitating the students' access to and participation in the receiving environment. She notes that transition activities require long-term considerations and service coordination and advocates for the communicating of best practice ideas between the sending and receiving teachers. Like O'Shea, Fowler (1988) points to the importance of communication between sites, the involvement of parents, and students' access to the receiving environment as being critical to the successful transition of students from early intervention settings to elementary school.

There is limited research in the area of reintegrating students with learning disabilities into the regular classroom setting. The studies which do exist tend to look primarily at the reintegration of students from resource room settings to regular classroom settings. Two studies were found that explore reintegration of students from special education classes. One of these focuses exclusively on students with learning disabilities. The other study has a more general focus on students with disabilities.

George and Lewis (1991) outline a four-phase process for reintegrating students into the mainstream. Their process is one that allows teachers to make data-based decisions about students' readiness to move to a less restrictive setting. It also helps to provide a

positive, fluid transition. The four phases are: long range planning, pre-exit activities, the transition, and follow-up and evaluation. Phase one, long-range planning, uses an individual education plan (IEP). It allows special education teachers to develop behavioural and academic goals and programs to ensure the students develop the competencies necessary for succeeding in the mainstream. Phase two, pre-exit activities, teaches students the necessary skills to succeed in new, less restrictive setting. The steps in this phase are: assessing the less restrictive setting, using routines from the less restrictive setting in the special class setting to give students practice with those routines, and assessing student readiness. Phase three, the transition, involves preparing the teaching staff and the students' parents for a change in placement. Phase four is student follow-up and evaluation. Also key to this process is the scheduling of consultative services for the receiving teacher. It can be on a regular or as-needed basis.

Fuchs, Fuchs, and Fernstrom (1992, 1993) examine the reintegration of students with learning disabilities on a case-by-case basis. The study evaluates a five-month effort to prepare 47 students with disabilities for a successful move from resource room to regular classroom math instruction. Preparation for transition includes the use of "transenvironmental programming" (TP) (Anderson-Inman, 1981) and curriculum-based measurement (CBM) (Deno, 1985). Findings indicate that students in the experimental groups, who are receiving TP or CBM or both, have a more positive attitude about leaving special education, more confidence about doing well in mainstream math, a conviction that they had learned more, a belief that they are perceived by their teachers as better students, and less worry about math than their nonhandicapped lower achieving peers. Teacher assigned grades were found to corroborate the students' perceptions.

In a second study, Fuchs, Fuchs, and Fernstrom (1995) evaluate the short-term and long-term effects of the case-by-case reintegration process set out in their 1992 study. Follow-up, conducted one year later (in the last half of year two), found that of the 38 who were reintegrated during year one, 22 were still receiving math instruction in the regular

classroom. They were concerned about this low rate of return to the mainstream, given the considerable amount of assistance provided to both special and regular educators through inservice training, provision of instructional materials, and project staffs' collaboration with the teachers, and their direct work with the students. Findings point to the need for on-going intervention to sustain the progress made by students in special education.

The Reintegration Project reported by Collins (1993) attempts to gather information about the reintegration process and examine how students progress through the system after being in a congregated (segregated) setting. Practices which may be most effective in promoting positive reintegration are discussed based on feedback from receiving schools and information from parents. Data were collected from receiving teachers using a brief questionnaire, from parents using personal interview conducted over the phone, and from selected students using a student questionnaire administered in an interview format. Collins notes the difficulty in getting the students to respond to the open-ended question format of the questionnaire. She adds that the results of the questionnaire provides little additional information to what has already been gathered. Recommendations included the tracking of students reintegrating into community schools from congregated settings, and the continued provision of appropriate supports for students within the context of the community school. These findings echo those of Fuchs, Fuchs, and Fernstrom (1992, 1993), Fuchs et al. (1995), and George and Lewis (1991) in calling for continued support for students with learning disabilities, and the need to follow students as they move into and through the regular school system.

In a study looking at the perceptions of mainstreamed students with learning disabilities, Vaughn, Schumm, and Kouzekanani (1993) found that students with learning disabilities, who were mainstreamed into regular classrooms for more than 50% of the school day, prefer general education teachers who make adaptations and accommodate students' learning needs to those who do not.

Instructional Models

Researchers view the merging of special and regular education through co-teaching as a potential key to successful inclusion of students with learning disabilities. Walther-Thomas, Bryant, and Land (1996) state that cooperative teaching or "co-teaching" is one support model through which students with disabilities can achieve greater academic and social success. They note that "as school systems move toward more inclusive education programs for students with disabilities, comprehensive co-planning at the district, building, and classroom levels ensures that structurally sound frameworks will be provided to support these programs" (p. 263).

Wong (1996) presents a TEAM Model as an alternative for merging special and regular education. This model focuses on integrating students with moderate disabilities such as learning disabilities, emotional disorders, behaviour disorders, and/or mild mental retardation, into the regular classroom setting. Like co-teaching, the TEAM model is implemented through team teaching between the classroom teacher and the specialist teacher. In addition, the TEAM model requires both pull-out services to provide intensive remediation and the teaching of prerequisite skills essential for success in the integrated classroom.

Cognitive Strategy Instruction

Regardless of the instructional model used, it is critical that the instructional practices benefit all students, including those with learning disabilities. Research demonstrates that cognitive strategy instruction is an instructional practice which assists all students, including those with learning disabilities, to be more successful learners. Mulcahy (1991) focuses on the role of strategy instruction in developing autonomous learners. Wong (1987) discusses the positive effects metacognitive research has had on the teaching of students with learning disabilities. Like Mulcahy (1991), Wong advocates for the acquisition of metacognitive skills by students with learning disabilities as a means of

enabling them to become autonomous and active learners. Both researchers support the need for goal-directed self-regulation in students with learning disabilities.

Ellis (1993) advocates the integration of cognitive strategy instruction and content area instruction as a means of helping adolescents with learning disabilities generalize the knowledge and strategies that they learn. His model, Integrated Strategy Instruction (ISI) involves four phases of instruction: orienting, framing, applying and extending. It provides the basis upon which resource instruction and content area class instruction can become more integrative.

Summary of the Literature Review

The research on the reintegration and mainstreaming of students with learning disabilities points to the potential for success within the parameters of a collaborative effort between regular and special educators, and the availability of adequate resources. I found few studies addressing the reintegration of students with learning disabilities from segregated programs. The research on reintegration from the resource room to the regular classroom suggests that transitions within the context of a single school will increase the chance of success as collaboration is enhanced by proximity.

The Reintegration Program presented by Collins (1993) speaks to the need for tracking students who reintegrate and for the continued provision of resources in the regular classroom. It does not however, offer suggestions on how the segregated programs might put structures and procedures in place to help ensure the successful reintegration of their students. The four-step process developed by George and Lewis (1991) has potential to be adapted for use in reintegration from segregated programs to community schools.

The students in this study attend a school jurisdiction that has no formal transition plan or model in place. Students who reintegrate into the mainstream from the learning disabilities program may receive transition support and monitoring if the receiving school or teacher requests assistance although there is no funding agreement in place to do this. When this type of informal transition planning happens, the sending and receiving teachers may

meet to discuss the needs of the student and share effective strategies for working with the student. Typically, once the new school year has started, there is no formal communication between the sending and receiving teachers. Inservices on teaching student with learning disabilities are available to receiving teachers, but are not mandatory. Attendance at such inservices has declined over the last three years as professional development funds have declined.

Vaughn, Schumm, and Kouzekanani (1993) gathered students' perceptions about regular education teachers who make adaptations in their classrooms. This piece of research was the only one I found that considered the perspectives of the students with learning disabilities. More opportunities are necessary for these students to share their experiences with researchers.

Missing in the studies of reintegration are the students' perspectives, their stories, and their experiences. This article addresses the question: "What is the reintegration experience for students with learning disabilities?" The students' stories provide insight into what makes the reintegration experience successful and what makes it challenging. The experiences told through the eyes of the students raise questions and issues that warrant discussion and further research.

Results

The stories of four students, Scarlet, Eric, April and Tom, are told below. Scarlet and Eric have successfully reintegrated into the regular stream after receiving education in the learning disabilities program. April and Tom reintegrated into the regular stream from the learning disabilities program and returned to the program after finding the regular stream too challenging.

Scarlet

Scarlet is a twelve year old grade seven student completing her second year of reintegration. She is a personable young woman and enjoyed the opportunity to talk about her experiences, both the successes and the challenges. Scarlet reintegrated after two years

in the learning disabilities program. She welcomed the opportunity to be back in a regular class and was happy that she knew lots of her fellow students.

Scarlet sees her own choices as factors in the success of her reintegration experience. Her pro-active approach includes letting teachers know she has a learning disability, asking for and receiving the help of teachers, friends and family members, and developing and using strategies to assist herself in being successful.

Scarlet recently learned to play the flute. She describes the similarities between learning to play an instrument and reintegrating into a regular classroom from a special program. *At the beginning I had trouble making a sound but now every time I blow one I just get it right."* In the same way, Scarlet found reintegration hard at first. It took her a few months to adjust to the larger class size and the faster pace of instruction. *I didn't have a clue what she (the teacher) was saying, I didn't understand. But I guess it was just because I was used to people going a little slower. After a few months, I got used to the pace.* The longer she sticks with it, the more comfortable she becomes and the easier it gets. In her opinion, she is doing*three imes better* in her second year than she did in her first year. Practice also plays a role in both learning to play the flute and reintegrating successfully. *I know the flute and coming from a LD program is totally different yet it's also kind of the same because playing the flute...first you...like when you first start, you don't know how but the teacher usually will tell you that it takes time and you have to practice and that's pretty much just the same as coming from a LD program.* Scarlet sees practice as the way you get better at a skill, be it learning to play the flute or asking questions when you don't understand something that has been said in class.

Scarlet asks a lot of questions. Being willing to ask, be it a question or a request for help, is part of being successful. Scarlet acknowledges that she had trouble asking for help at first, that she *chickened out a lot.*. However, as the months went on, she gained confidence and hasn't looked back. Scarlet says that asking for help makes her feels good. She likes getting help and she says it *feels good that they (teachers) can help me out and I*

can understand things. Scarlet explains that often her teachers will notice when she is puzzled or having difficulty and come over and help her. *Teachers explain it so I can understand and because every now and then they can tell that I'm puzzled so they come over and talk to me.* Scarlet believes that her teachers feel good helping her understand things. In her eyes, it's a mutually beneficial relationship.

Scarlet also seeks help from her friends and her family. She has developed a strong network of support to assist her in staying on track. Her friends help her in class by explaining things when she doesn't understand and by sharing their notes with her if she needs them. *My friend, she was better at it than I was and we'd sit beside each other the whole year and she always helped me out whenever I needed it. It I didn't understand something she would explain it one way or if I didn't understand that she's try it another way.* Like her teachers, Scarlet's friends are able to tell when she is puzzled or getting frustrated and they help her out as much as they can. Scarlet admits that her study skills are not always the greatest. Her friends and her parents help to make sure she gets her studying done and that her assignments get completed on time. *I have not the best study skills. What usually happens is Sue, she's my parent...or my Mom's boyfriend...like if I'm getting a snack like I do every day after school, it I tell them I'm having a test today, the next day or something, they go into my bag and find my books and they're like, "OK, Scarlet sit down", and I'm like, "oh no, not again! "They do it every time.* The pay off is that *I do usually end up doing pretty good on my tests.*

Scarlet observes that her listening skills have improved. *I pay more attention most of the time lately and I usually ignore other people.* This is important in a setting where the pace of instruction is faster, the class size is larger, there are more distractions to contend with, and lessons and instructions are often delivered orally. Scarlet talks about the goal setting she is doing. *Since most of my classes are talking about goals, I set my goals to pay attention, try and make the best things I can and do my best in my work .* She feels this has had a positive effect on her achievement. Scarlet also uses a system for reminding herself

about the things she needs to do. Using post-it notes, Scarlet puts reminders on her binder tabs as well as on the front of her binder and textbooks. Sometimes she writes on her hand.

When I ask Scarlet what advice she would offer students who are reintegrating, she identifies the areas she herself has worked on over the last two years. *Their listening skills are going to have to improve... They don't have to worry much, if they did end up asking the teacher what ever they need to... nobody really cares because sometimes they don't understand either."* Scarlet suggests that the students remember they will have friends who can help them out. From her perspective, she is never alone in her experience of reintegration.

Eric

Eric is an eleven year old student in his third year of reintegration. He is a friendly boy who seems to enjoys talking about his experience in the regular classroom setting. He also enjoys talking about other areas of his life outside of school.

Eric explains that the first day of reintegration was okay because *I didn't have very much homework*. He is quick to add that the work is harder in the regular classroom and that at the beginning he felt unfamiliar with the some of the curriculum, like mapping in social studies, because he had only worked on *reading and stuff* in the learning disabilities classroom. Eric adds, *...I'm learning now...I'm better at it. I've been doing it lots...cause I've been working on it so much that I know more about it now.*

Eric's comfort level in the classroom is determined by a two key factors. The first is the friendships he forms. He mentions at the start of the interview that he has more friends in the regular class than he did when he was in the learning disabilities program; *...in the learning disabilities class I had less friends, now in the normal classes, I had lots of friends.* The second factor is how interested he is in the wok he has to do. The more interested he is, the better he does. *When things are really interesting, then I feel I can do real good and when things aren't that interesting, then sometimes I don't do very good.* Eric offers an example of a research project he was asked to do. He didn't want to do it and procrastinated

until the last minute. Eric completed the project with the help of his mother and handed it in a day late. He adds that he *felt good about it* even though marks were deducted for it being late.

Eric says he is also uncomfortable when he does not know the answers to questions he is asked to do and when figuring out the questions takes him a long time. *When I know that I don't know very much of the questions...then I don't feel very good...comfortable doing it...sometimes when I'm doing my math, it takes me a long time to figure out all the questions. Well it feels bad when I'm doing the question but once I'm done it and I know I think it's right, then I'm proud of it. Like, "Yeah, you did it."* For Eric, doing well is equated with getting lots of work done and getting a good mark.

While Eric isn't bothered by getting help in class' It *doesn't really bother me, everybody has to have help one day or another...* and asks his teachers for help when he needs it. He appears to see his mother as his primary source of support. She helps him with his homework and gives him direction when he is stuck. When his mother is not available, Eric's sister fills this role. *No one really (helps me) except for my Mom , she helps me out all the time and if my Mom doesn't get a question or something that's really hard...then my sister helps.* Unlike Scarlet, Eric doesn't mention his friends as a source of support. *Only if the teacher asks me to work with my friends, then we'll help each other out. But other than that, not at all."*Friends serve a primarily social purpose.

In general, Eric takes a more passive approach to his reintegration. He states that sometimes he feels his teacher is too busy to help him. This determines whether he asks questions or asks for help. Eric chooses to tell his teachers about his learning disability based on whether he thinks they will give him any extra help. *In grade four and five I did (t*ell the teacher about his learning disability), *but in grade six I don't. I just felt like Mrs. D. would help me more than Ms. S. and Ms. P. would.* Eric notes that in the learning disabilities program the teacher helps you more and knows you have a problem. In the regular class the teacher doesn't know you have a problem so she can't help you as much.

Well, in learning disabilities is more easy because the teacher helps you more because she knows you have a problem with it and in other grades the teacher doesn't know you have a problem so she doesn't know she has to help you a lot. Eric will be entering junior high next year. When I ask if he plans to tell his junior high teachers about his learning disabilities Eric responds, *I don't know...it depends. If I'm not doing good and they're asking me this and that and I don't really know, then for the first month or two I'll just - _____, like if it gets harder and harder and harder, then I'll tell them I do.*

Eric's advice for students who are reintegrating echoes Scarlet's. He advises students to be prepared to improve their listening skills, study every day, *...study on the weekdays or something, study around 15 minutes or something and make sure you know it...*, ask for help when they need it, and never do their homework in front of the TV. When I ask what he brought with him from the learning disabilities program that helps him be successful, Eric again mentions the idea of putting in extra time and getting lots of practice.

April

April is an eighteen year old student completing her second year of grade twelve. She is an outgoing and friendly young woman who articulates her experience clearly and thoughtfully. April was educated in the learning disabilities program for two years beginning in grade three. She reintegrated for the first time in grade five and remained in the regular classroom until junior high. April re-entered the learning disabilities program in grade eight and remains in the program in high school. April receives some of her courses in the mainstream setting. It is this experience that she focuses on in the interviews. April provides an insight into the high school experience of reintegration which can be added to the experiences of the other participants.

April is a pro-active student who appears to do whatever she can to ensure her success as a learner. When she first reintegrated into the high school program April was scared. Her primary concern was that she would be asked to read out loud in class or that she would be asked to respond to a question in class. *...the teachers like to get the students*

involved and get the students to read and it's just I think that was one of the scariest things is I was always afraid that I would have to read. ..If it's just kind of stuff I'm not really sure about, then I won't want to answer the question...If they ask me a question about whatever we're learning at the time, I'll be totally lost and I'll have no idea what to say. April was concerned that she would not be able to read well enough or that she would not understand the lesson well enough to answer questions. When a lesson involved concepts she did understand, April would raise her hand and volunteer an answer. It helped her feel more comfortable to know that some of the other students were also having trouble understanding at times.

When April tells her teachers that she has a learning disability, she feels that they are less likely to call on her in class. When they do, they tend to ask her questions that she is able to respond to. The teachers attempt to keep her involved in the class but not to put her under more stress than she can handle. ...*When we told them that we have a learning disability...they understood and...They still got us involved enough but didn't really pressure us to answer questions of whatever.* While accommodating her need to feel comfortable in class by reducing the pressure to contribute, April acknowledges that her teachers hold the same expectations for her as they hold for other students when it comes to assignments and projects; ...*But for assignments that you've been doing that you might do with a group or you might do with your notes and stuff like that, then I don't think they'll expect less, but I'm sure they'd expect just as much of me than with anyone else.*

April explains that projects, assignments and quizzes allow her to better demonstrate her understanding of concepts and learning than midterms and final exams do. Projects and assignments allow her to access her notes and to work with small groups who can explain things to her if she needs them to. *Projects and assignments I do better at cause it's like you have the information in your textbook or in your binder or whatever and sometimes you're in groups so you get help and people explain it to you - the assignments and stuff so I do...I do good at projects."* Quizzes, which rely on April's short-term

memory, cause her little difficulty. April does not fare as well on mid-terms and final exams. She finds it difficult to remember all the material presented over the longer time period. For April, it is like having to learn the material all over again. April's ability to retain material in her long term memory is a major concern for her. ...*When tests came, it was hard cause you have to study like almost start over again just trying to figure out and understand what you did before.* April uses exercise to deal with the stress. *I'll go for a run and just burn it all off. It helps. I feel it helps. The fresh air clears my mind.*

April enlists her support network to help her success at school. She tells her teachers about her learning disability. Once they know, they are able to provide her with the extra help she needs. This often takes the form of making sure she understands the lesson and taking the time to answer her questions and clarify homework assignments with her. *I took Bio 20 and it's a really hard course and I was in a regular class and my teacher knew that I have a learning disability and there was a friend of mine who also had a learning disability in class with me, and my teacher she'd always like...come up to us and say...after class, "Do you guys need help? We can help," and so they helped a lot.* April tries to get help right after the teacher is finished instruction and then makes little notes to herself to help her later when she goes to do her homework. April also enlists the support of friends from the learning disabilities program who are now reintegrated. Whether it is moral support, study groups or homework partners, this support is important to April. *We'd just get together at lunch or after school or something and just kind of do our homework together or kind of explain to each other what something was...like an assignment or something.*

I ask April what skills she brought with her from the learning disabilities program that help her in the regular class. April identifies study skills and learning to ask questions as important skills she learned in the program. *"I think getting help...like learning to ask questions to the teachers and stuff, I don't know...like in the learning disabilities program, they teach you the proper way of studying and make sure you ask for questions and if you*

don't understand something and they kind of grind that into your head to ask questions." During the second interview April adds that she also learned notetaking skills and the importance of listening in the learning disabilities program.

April's idea of a teacher who helps students successfully reintegrate is one who involves the student with learning disabilities in ways that don't pressure him or her, and who takes the time to understand what is going on in the classroom for that student. *They helped by just...like they'd involved you in the class but not...they'd ask you questions, but sort of questions they knew you would know kind of think...just to keep you going in the class and keep you involved and just...they'd help you...just help you so you'd understand what's going on in the classroom and I think that's a big thing - if you don't understand, then it's hard.* April's advice to students who are reintegrating is to be prepared to spend a great deal of time studying and doing homework. She adds that they also need to ask questions and to attend school every day.

April expresses the opinion that the learning disabilities program is easier than the regular classroom. She notes that there is a teacher and a program assistant to provide one-on-one assistance to the students. She explains that the pacing of instruction is slower and there is lots of time to complete homework during class time rather than at home. *I found that in the Learning Disabilities program, it's like easier because you have a lot of help from the teachers, like sometimes you have a teacher and then the teachers' assistant, so you have lots of help and it's good, but it's hard because once you leave that program and then you go in the regular class, it's like you're going the speed. I mean you have to totally keep up with all the other kids and it's hard because you're not used to...you're used to going so slow...taking your time and then all of a sudden you have to like go through these courses and lessons and stuff like that so fast and it's just ...it makes it difficult sometimes.*

April believes that this tendency to provide assistance and adjust pacing is a liability for students leaving the learning disabilities program. She feels that the segregated program should enforce stricter deadlines for assignments and that more responsibility should be

placed on students to complete assignments at home independently, rather than in the classroom; *...she gives us lots of time to do our homework and stuff like that, but...it's nice of her to do but I think she should kind of say OK, now this homework's due this day, has to be done and then we're starting on our next lesson instead of giving us two or three classes to do our homework and just sit there the whole class and do our homework.*

April mentions that she is applying for admission to a program offered by her local community college. She expresses her concern that, because the learning disabilities class doesn't push as hard as the regular class, she may not be able to keep up with the academic demands of college. *..I almost think I'm not prepared for college or whatever. I know college is a lot harder...it's a lot harder than high school and learning disabilities, it's so laid back and...I'm just afraid once I get into college I'm going to be swamped.*

Tom

Tom is an eighteen year old student who is also in his second year of grade twelve. Educated in the learning disabilities program since elementary school, Tom talks frankly about his reintegration experience in the high school setting. He makes it clear more than once during the interview, that upon reintegrating he made a conscious decision to have what he called a "normal" experience. He wanted to experience what a "normal" high school was like and to see what he could do on his own.

Tom did not have a successful reintegration experience. From his first day back he missed the one-on-one he experienced in the learning disabilities program. He states that he didn't know anything about the teacher and that he *just took things as they go*. Tom explains that he never felt comfortable in the regular classroom setting. He says that he doesn't remember ever doing well during reintegration and that nothing turned out successfully for him.

Reintegrated in three subjects: math, social studies, and art, Tom dropped his math class shortly into the term. He explains that he started having problems because the teacher just wrote on the board and didn't explain anything. *...It was just to much, the teacher just*

totally wrote on the board, didn't explain anything, all I knew was there's an "X" here, there's a "Y" there kind of thing and I just flipped out;and I ended up dropping the class.... He went on to say that he didn't know anyone in the class and that the teacher came across as unapproachable. Social studies went better. Tom's best friend was in the class and provided him with moral and academic support. *...It was good because my best friend was in the class at the time, so he would help me a lot and I would just be afraid to go up and ask the teacher cause nobody really went up and asked questions really.* Tom explains that his friend assisted him in finding answers for assignments and quizzes and also helped him cope with the tension he was feeling in the class.

Tom has considerable artistic ability *...art's almost a breeze for me*, and his binder is covered with pictures he has drawn. He doesn't, however, see art as part of the school-based experience. Art was just art; he separated it out from the academic subjects and is unable to associate it with any school-related success he might have had during his reintegration. Tom acknowledges that he received positive feedback in art for a painting he had done. He said that he didn't think that the project he had done was anything special, but the praise made him feel good.

Tom was able to pass the assignments and quizzes in class because of the help of his friend. His friend showed him where the answers were and Tom would copy them out. He doesn't appear to consider this cheating. Tom suggests that because he was getting passing scores on assignments, his teachers never suspected he had academic problems. It wasn't until exam time that Tom experienced significant problems. He relates one episode in social studies in which the teacher presents a lesson, using what Tom describes as a mind map or web. Tom is familiar with mind maps and thought that he understood the content of the lesson. However, when faced with the actual exam, Tom could see no relationship between the material he thought he knew and the content of the exam. *So I thought, I understand it –it started making sense like who's first and then who came second kind of*

thing and I thought I started understanding it and then we go to a test or something and I just...it's like all the questions an stuff has nothing to do with what I thought I knew.

Tom appears to be a passive learner. He chooses not to let his teachers and friends know about his learning disability. *When I went back, I wanted to try...I wanted to almost forget that I had a learning disability and try to be normal and try to not really tell anybody and see what I can do on my own kind of thing and it just...it was really tough.* He relies on his friend for moral support and to help him find answers for assignments. Tom also reports that he had access to a school counsellor but that he did not choose to talk with her about how things were going or ask her for help. At one point in the interview he acknowledges that there are always people you can go to for help, but that he never really did - he prefers to keep things to himself.

Tom dropped out of school three months into the reintegration experience. He explains that *after not understanding for awhile, you just start to not care much anymore, I give up kind of thing*. When I ask if he would do things differently if he was to go through his reintegration experience again, Tom says no, that if he could do it again he still wouldn't tell people about his learning disability. He goes on to say that, although he is glad he had the experience, if he was given the opportunity to reintegrate again he wouldn't do it. He feels that dropping out was the best thing he could have done because it forced him to assume more responsibility for his own life. Eventually, he chose to return to school and he reentered the learning disabilities program.

When I ask what advice he could offer students who were reintegrating, he recommends that they have a study period in which someone is available to offer help. This person would act as a tutor and assist students in working through the assignments they receive in the classroom. Tom also says that students need to know that asking the teacher questions to get things explained is okay. He adds that for him, knowing people in the class makes it easier for him to ask questions. His perception of the teacher also affects whether or not he asks questions. His math teacher, who Tom describes as *kind of mean* with an

either you know it or you don't and there was no in between attitude, was harder to ask questions of than his social studies teacher who came across as friendly and willing to help. Tom goes on to say that he feels the learning disabilities program provided him with some skills and strategies that were useful to him in the regular classroom. These include an understanding of how to take notes and how to plan and write an essay. He notes that it is important to figure out little tricks you can use to do things faster.

Tom knew that the regular classroom was going to be tough. He feels the biggest challenge was adjusting to a totally different way of teaching. He much prefers and responds to the style of teaching in the learning disabilities program in which the teaching is one-on-one and you personally know your teacher. He describes the relationship as being like a friendship and later says that *in way you're like one of their kids. They overly care about you.* For Tom, the *one-on-one makes it easier to talk and to have things explained.* The relationship makes *you trust the teachers more and you learn more from them,* unlike the regular classroom where the *teachers just stand up in front of the classroom and tell you in front of the whole class. Other teachers* (mainstream classroom) *you don't even want to learn from because they are no fun.*

Discussion

Reflecting on the reintegration experiences of each student, Scarlet is clearly the most successful. She summed up her view of reintegration with an analogy: it's like learning to play the flute, it's hard at first, but it gets easier. Scarlet enjoys the challenges of the regular classroom and is optimistic about her ability to be successful. She is confident that she can do well and makes choices in her learning that reflect that confidence. Scarlet trusts teachers. She believes that they are there to help her and that they want her to do well. Scarlet feels good about letting her teachers know she has a learning disability and is willing to ask them questions when she needs extra help or she doesn't understand.

Commonalties

Whether their reintegration experience was successful or not, the stories of the four students reflect some common themes that warrant consideration: the need for a support network, a recognition of the support received from the learning disabilities program, the value of asking for help, and the importance of trusting teachers.

Support Networks.

Each student developed and maintained a support network which they could rely on to help them. All involved friends in their support network to varying degrees. Tom relied solely on a friend. Scarlet and April included teachers in their support network. Eric and Scarlet involved their families. Scarlet and April believe it is important that their teachers know they have a learning disability. When they told teachers, Scarlet and April found their teachers were willing to take extra time to ensure that they understood the lessons. In April's case, telling her teachers was also a way to avoid some of the pressures of the regular classroom, including being called on to answer questions or to read out loud.

Upon reintegrating, Scarlet and Eric expanded their social network to include friends who do not have a learning disability. They maintained their friendships with students from the learning disabilities program, however they also sought out and included other students as friends. By doing this, Scarlet and Eric chose not to identify themselves solely by their learning disability. Rather than hang on to their educational past, they have been able to interact with their peers in a social and learning context that is different from the one they experienced in the learning disabilities program. As a result, Eric and Scarlet are more fully a part of the regular school milieu. By observing their non-learning disabled friends, Scarlet and Eric gained insight into what makes them successful learners and use some of the knowledge for their own benefit.

During their reintegration, April and Tom relied solely on the support of friends who had also been in the learning disabilities program. Neither made friends outside of this context. In a sense, they were unable to let go of the their connection with the learning

disabilities program. While the support of friends who understand and share their learning disability is important, friends outside of that context could have allowed April and Tom to more fully experience the regular classroom environment and to learn some of the valuable skills and strategies used by other successful learners. In addition, April and Tom may have been able to see beyond their learning disability and begin to redefine themselves in other more positive ways.

Importance of the Learning Disabilities Program.

Each of the students acknowledged the importance of the support they received from the learning disabilities program. All suggested that the learning disabilities program was "easier" than the regular classroom. "Easier" typically translated into the fact that in the learning disabilities program the pace of instruction was slower, and that because of the nature of the program, students were more likely to receive assistance without having to ask for it. They all felt that they had learned some valuable skills and strategies that could be used in the regular classroom. These included study skills, note taking skills, and the importance of listening and asking questions.

For April and Tom, the learning disabilities program became the key to their success. Both acknowledged that they needed the support of the program to succeed as learners. Tom articulated his dependence on the program, referring to the "overly caring" nature of the teachers which allows him to trust them. He relies on the additional support provided by the teachers in the program, including the one-on-one nature of the instruction. While Tom sees that lack of support in the regular program as a flaw in the system, April views the additional support provided by the program as a stumbling block for students who plan to reintegrate and to move on to college or other post-secondary options.

The learning disabilities program was key to the success of Scarlet and Eric as well, however in a different way. The program gave them the skills and strategies they needed to be successful. Both students left the program with an independence and confidence that contributed to their success in the regular classroom.

Asking for Help.

Asking for help was a third theme common to the experience of each of the students, although they followed through on asking for help to varying degrees. Scarlet and April were the most willing to seek help from their teachers. They saw their teachers as wanting to help them and that made asking easier. Eric and Tom acknowledged that asking for help was okay and that it was an important part of making sure you understood what as going on in the classroom. Neither of them, however, asked their teachers for help very often. Each had their own reasons for this. Eric felt that sometimes his teachers were too busy helping other students to help him. Tom's decision to ask for help was influenced by his perception of the teacher as friendly or mean, as well as whether he knew anyone in the class.

Trusting Teachers.

Notwithstanding the success of their reintegration, Scarlet and April took a proactive approach to the experience. Both believed it was important that their teachers knew they had a learning disability and took responsibility for telling them. More important, each believed that their teachers would want to help them and that their teachers received some positive benefit for themselves by doing so. Scarlet and April trusted that their teachers would respond to them positively and fairly once they knew more about their disability. It would seem, from their stories, that this in fact was true. The extra help and support they received from their teachers, served to reinforce their beliefs in the importance of making teachers aware of their disability.

Eric and Tom believed they had a degree of control over the amount of information their teachers knew about them. Tom chose not to tell his teachers about his learning disability and Eric chose to tell based on whether he thought the teacher would give him extra help or not. Neither appeared to see any real benefit from making their learning disability known to their teachers. While Scarlet and April see their relationships with their teachers as mutually beneficial, Eric and Tom assume their is nothing to be gained from

letting teachers know about their disability. The element of trust present in Scarlet's and April's beliefs is lacking in Eric's and Tom's.

Idiosyncracies

Even within the common themes presented, it is clear that differences exist in the experiences of the students. These differences played a role in the individual successes and challenges of the students and directly effected their experience in the regular classroom.

In talking about their regular classroom experience, Scarlet and Eric expressed confidence in their ability to be successful. Both students acknowledged the increased pressures of the regular classroom. They knew that they would be challenged as learners and that they would have to work harder. Their confidence allowed them to approach the challenges of the regular classroom positively. Both Scarlet and Eric were able to identify the areas they need to work on, such as, attention and listening skills, and accepted responsibility for solving problems that arose as a result of these areas of need. They recognized the importance of seeking support from others and weren't afraid to ask for help when they needed it.

April lacked confidence in her ability to be successful. Unlike Scarlet and Eric, she was concerned with avoiding pressure situations such as those created when she was asked to read out loud in class. April took steps to cope with the pressure, such as, letting her teachers know she had a learning disability as a way to reduce the chance she would be called on to read out loud in class. However, she continued to express concern about the pressure, particularly as it related to the college program she had applied to. By trying to avoid the pressure, April has not developed strategies which might enable her to successfully overcome the challenges.

Like April, Tom also chose to avoid pressure. In the classroom Tom was a passive learner, rarely asking questions, relying on his friend to assist him with assignments, and just remaining aloof from teachers and other students. Eventually, Tom chose to drop out as a way of coping with the pressure. Rather than accepting responsibility for his difficulties,

Tom chose to blame his teachers, in particular his math teacher. This tendency to blame others is unique to Tom and, from his story, played a significant role in his decision to drop out: since the problems were someone else's, he saw very little he could do to improve the situation and experience success. Even when he was given positive feedback for his work (as he was in art) Tom was unable to accept it as valid, even though it made him feel good. Once again, the words and actions of a teacher were seen as suspect and Tom chose not to accept credit or responsibility for the good work he had done.

Both April and Tom were able to articulate the things they needed to do to be successful in the regular classroom, such as, taking good notes, asking for help, and using the study skills they had been taught. It is difficult to determine from their stories whether they actually followed through with on these. Their failure to succeed in the regular classroom would suggest that they even though they knew what to do, they were unable to follow through independently, without the support of the learning disabilities program.

Concluding Comments

Scarlet, Eric, April, and Tom offer us insight into the experience of reintegration for students with learning disabilities. This experience will be validated by the degree to which their stories ring true for other students with learning disabilities who have experienced reintegration.

Gathering stories from other students will help to answer two questions raised by the stories in this article. The first is the question of a possible gender difference in the area of advocacy. While the girls advocated for themselves in the regular classroom, the boys did not. The second question deals with the issue of dependency. At what point do students become dependent on a segregated special education program, such as the learning disabilities program, to the point where they are unable to function successfully in the mainstream setting? April and Tom spent more years in a learning disabilities program than Scarlet and Eric did, and in turn had more difficulties coping with reintegration.

Finally, the issue of appropriate transition support for students who are reintegrating from learning disabilities programs is one which warrants further study and discussion. A case can be made, for each of the students presented in this article, that transition support could have further increased their academic success. If April and Tom's mainstream teachers had better knowledge about learning disabilities and instructional strategies , these students might have had a more successful experience.

Scarlet and Eric both identified teacher behaviours that made it more difficult for them to ask for help. Transition support would provide assistance by helping their teachers better understand the needs of students with learning disabilities and the instructional practices that maximize students' learning potential.

The role of transition support in the successful reintegration of students is clearly supported in the literature (Fuchs et al, 1995; Vaughn and Schumm, 1995; Collins, 1993; Fuchs, Fuchs and Fernstrom, 1992, 1993; George and Lewis, 1991). These studies point to the need to make consulting services available to receiving teachers, the importance of ongoing professional development, and the value of developing and revising curriculum and instruction that meets the needs of all students. The reality of present day education budgets however, is such that additional support is costly and therefore difficult for school districts to provide. While transition support provides long term benefits by keeping reintegrated students in the mainstream rather than seeing them return to, or remain in, more costly special education programs, the shortage of education dollars keeps educators looking only at the short term.

Vaughn and Schumm (1995) point to the importance of putting the needs of the students first. We need to ensure they have strategies for dealing with aspects of the mainstream classroom such as a faster pace of instruction and different instructional styles. We know from the experiences of the students in this study that self-awareness, confidence, a support network, and a willingness to ask for help, are directly related to

success in the regular classroom. These factors are not addressed in the literature where the focus is primarily on teachers and instruction.

While we know that the use of cognitive strategies allows students with learning disabilities to become autonomous and active learners (Wong, 1987; Mulcahy, 1991; Ellis, 1993) It is interesting that none of the students are able to identify the strategies they use. Only Scarlet talks about using goals to assist her in being a better learner. It is not clear why this is the case: hopefully it is because they have internalized the strategies they were taught in the learning disabilities program and no longer see them as something separate that they bring to their learning. However, it is possible that they do not transfer the strategies from the learning disabilities program to the mainstream classroom.

As educators, our commitment to ensuring the best possible education for all students requires that we examine the questions and issues raised by the stories of Scarlet, Eric, April , and Tom. Their stories give us starting points for examining the level of support we provide within the segregated learning disabilities program and developing strategies so our students are well equipped to handle the demands of the mainstream classroom.

Students, teachers, and parents need to understand the importance of establishing a support network, seeking and using feedback, asking for help, and accepting responsibility for learning. We want students leaving the learning disabilities programs to be confident learners who can set realistic goals and fully participate and be successful in the school experience.

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Table 1

Question Guide

1. What are the times when you feel you are doing really well? (specific examples) Does that happen a lot?
2. What are the times when you feel you are not doing well? (specific examples)
3. Who helps you with your learning? How often?
4. How do they help you?
5. What is it like for you, getting help in class?
6. What helps you with your learning?
7. What doesn't help you learn in this setting?
8. What do you do when you're stuck (academically or socially)?
9. What advice would you give to students who are coming back to a regular classroom after having been in a learning disabilities program?

Supplementary Question Guide

1. What did you bring with you from the learning disabilities class that helps you in the regular classroom?
2. Is there anything you wish you had learned or known before you came back to the regular classroom?

Note. Questions were phrased in the past tense for students who had returned to the regular classroom.

Conclusion

My thesis centers on the personal stories of four students. I chose to explore their stories because I believe that they offer insights into the reintegration experience that are missing in the literature. By focusing primarily on teachers, instruction, and assessment, the literature often leaves out the perspectives of the students.

The thesis process has been a positive experience. I had the opportunity to meet and talk one-on-one with four interesting students. Through our discussions, I found support for many of my views about reintegration and I gained a better understanding of the needs of students with learning disabilities who re-enter the mainstream setting. I appreciate the honestly and frankness with which each student spoke.

The insights into reintegration offered by Scarlet, Eric, April, and Tom will be validated by the degree to which they ring true for other students with learning disabilities who have experienced reintegration. With seven years of teaching experience in a learning disabilities program, I am confident saying that these four students are representative of the mix of students in the program. There is a bit of each of them in the students I have taught. Their experiences support the findings in the literature, including the need for transition support and the importance of monitoring the progress of reintegrated students.

Scarlet, Eric, April, and Tom each came to their interview ready to talk with me about their experiences. I understood each of them to be students who could articulate the experience of reintegration and give me useful data for my study. I approached each interview planning to spend an hour or more talking with them. In fact, the longest interview was approximately 40 minutes in length. The students had difficulty elaborating on their responses and each, at times, showed limited insight into their experiences. Reflecting on my interview schedule and the probing I used to draw the students out, I believe that in the end, I got the richest data possible from each of them.

In reconsidering my study, I would add the question "What is a learning disability?" to my list. The students' responses might have helped me better understand how they view their disability and how they believe it affects their lives.

Eric and Tom had difficulty reflecting on their experience. Their responses in the first interview lacked the depth of insight I was hoping for. They seemed have difficulty explaining themselves when I asked them to talk more about a particular experience. Much of what they related during their interviews had more to do with their teachers, friends, or families than it had to do with them. They tended to externalize the experience. Eric did not use the second interview effectively, he did not add anything that enriched the story of his reintegration experience. Tom chose not to do a second interview at all. He made some strong statements in his first interview that I used in developing my themes. I wanted his feedback on my interpretations of his experience and on the themes I had identified.

I appreciated the degree of trust Scarlet and April have in teachers. The idea that the relationship between a student and teacher mutually beneficial, with positive feelings generated through the giving and receiving of help, is one not often articulated by students.

The boys did not demonstrate this degree of trust. They went as far as choosing not to tell teachers about their learning disability. Neither felt that their would be much benefit to them if their teachers knew. They appeared to believe that their teachers wouldn't know if they didn't tell them.

I was interested in the fact that none of the students were able to articulate the learning strategies they use as learners. I know that each of the students come from learning disabilities programs in which cognitive strategies are taught. The question of why they did not talk in detail about strategies, even when directly asked, is a puzzling one. It is tempting to believe that Scarlet and Eric have simply internalized the strategies to the point where they are no longer aware of using them, whereas April and Tom did not transfer the strategies from the learning disabilities program to the mainstream class.

In order for students with learning disabilities to successfully transfer their learning strategies from one context to another, for example from a special education classroom to a mainstream setting, it is critical that the teachers in both contexts teach cognitive strategies and understand the role of these strategies in creating autonomous learners. The most expedient way to ensure that teachers have this knowledge is to create a course on cognitive strategy instruction and require all undergraduate education students to enroll. Such a course could provide these students with a grounding in cognitive strategy instruction, including the rational for its use, the methodology, and key strategies that benefit all learners including those with learning disabilities.

The need for transition support for students who are reintegrating into mainstream classrooms is clearly supported by the literature, and is a need that emerged from the stories of Scarlet, Eric, April, and Tom. Each of them would have benefited from appropriate support during their transition. April and Tom had the most to gain from receiving transition support. Monitoring their transition to the mainstream may have assisted them in finding ways to cope with the academic pressures and encouraged them to use the strategies they have learned to assist them in completing assignments successfully.

Through their experiences, Scarlet, Eric, April, and Tom identify several critical, student-based factors that support successful reintegration into the regular classroom. These include: asking for help, developing a support network, confidence, independence, and self-awareness. I am pleased to see these factors emerge, either by their presence or their absence in the actions of the students. I recognize the importance of these factors in the students I teach and know that they play an important role in their academic success. As educators in special education classes, these factors suggest skills and attitudes we need to ensure our students learn if they are to be prepared for reintegration.

Dependency on segregated special education classes is a key issue that came out of this study. Clearly, April and Tom were dependent on the learning disabilities program for their success. This issue raises the question, "At what point do students become dependent

on a segregated special education program, such as the learning disabilities program, to a point where they are unable to function successfully in the regular classroom setting?" Further research is needed to address this question. The answer is complex but we do know that the longer we educate students in such settings, the less prepared they are to return to the mainstream.

Further research is also needed in the area of gender differences. The girls in my study take a more pro-active approach to their learning, letting their teachers know they have a learning disability and asking for help. The boys are more passive. They tend to withhold information about their disability and ask fewer questions. Tom tends to externalize his problems. He places the responsibility for his difficulties on others, primarily his teachers, rather than accepting any responsibility himself. Further research could determine whether these students represent the general population of students with learning disabilities. If so, research could provide a direction for educators to take in addressing these differences in both the segregated special education program and the regular classroom.

Educating students in a special education program, such as the learning disabilities program, is costly. This study points us in a direction to reduce these costs. In the learning disabilities program students need to develop skills in advocacy, developing support networks, and increasing confidence and independence. It is important to then go the next step and provide support for these students as they reintegrate. Such support will encourage students to transfer the skills they have learned, and will help their teachers better understand the needs of the students and the best instructional practices for helping to make their reintegration successful. It is a short-term investment that will have long-term gains for our students.

APPENDIX A

Interview Consent Form
(parent version)

Project Title: The Reintegration of Students with Learning Disabilities: Gaining the Students' Perspective

Investigator: Dana Antayá-Moore
Graduate Student
Faculty of Education
Department of Educational Psychology
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Office Phone: 433-3326

Advisor: Dr. Bob Mulcahy
Professor
Faculty of Education
Department of Educational Psychology
University of Alberta
Office Phone: 492-5211

The purpose of this research is to gain an understanding of reintegration as experienced by students with learning disabilities who have attended an Edmonton Public Schools, Learning Disabilities site and then returned to the regular classroom.

My son/daughter's participation in this study is completely voluntary. I am aware that their responses during the interview will be audio recorded. I understand that they have the right to choose not to answer any questions they may find objectionable. I understand that I have the right to withdraw my son/daughter at any time and request that his/her responses not by used for inclusion in this study. I also understand that my son/daughter may exercise the same rights.

I understand that this information will be used as data for the interviewer's Master's thesis on the experience of reintegration for students with learning disabilities. All names and distinguishing information will be kept strictly confidential. I understand that my son/daughter will be asked to select the pseudonym they wish to go by in the written findings. All information will be kept securely locked behind closed doors in an office. All records will be destroyed seven years after the study is completed.

The information and findings of this study will be published and may be presented at conferences. Your son/daughter's name or any information which may identify him/her will not be used.

If you have any questions or concerns about this study, you may contact the researcher, Dana Antayá-Moore, at 433-3326.

Consent

I, _____, have read this information and do hereby give permission for _____ to participate in a study entitled The Reintegration of Students with Learning Disabilities: Gaining the Students' Perspective. I am aware of my rights as the parent and have had a chance to ask whatever questions I have about this study and my participation in it. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX B
Interview Consent Form
(student version)

Project Title: The Reintegration of Students with Learning Disabilities: Gaining the Students' Perspective

Investigator: Dana Antayá-Moore
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Office Phone: 492-5211

The purpose of this research is to gain an understanding of reintegration as it is experienced by students with learning disabilities who have attended an Edmonton Public Schools, Learning Disabilities site and then returned to the regular classroom.

I understand that I am volunteering to be in this study. I know that my responses during the interview will both audio recorded. I understand that I have the right to choose not to answer any questions I am not comfortable with. I also understand that I have the right to withdraw at any time and that I can ask that my responses not by used for inclusion in this study.

I understand that this information will be used as data for the interviewer's Master's thesis on the experience of reintegration for students with learning disabilities. All names and distinguishing information will be kept strictly confidential. I understand that I will be asked to select another name to go by in the written findings. All information will be kept securely locked behind closed doors in an office. All records will be destroyed seven years after the study is completed.

The information and findings of this study will be published and may be presented at conferences. I understand that my name or any information which may identify me will not be used.

If I have any questions or concerns about this study, I may contact the researcher, Dana Antayá-Moore, at 433-3326.

Consent

I, _____, have read this information and do hereby give my to participate in a study entitled *The Reintegration of Students with Learning Disabilities: Gaining the Students' Perspective*. I am aware of my rights and have had a chance to ask whatever questions I have about this study and my participation in it. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX C
Orienting Instructions

Orienting instructions for students still in the regular classroom

I'm interested in learning about students' experiences when they go back to the regular classroom after being in a learning disabilities program. I would like you to tell me about the feelings and experiences you've had since you went back to the regular classroom. I want to know what it was like for you. I'll be asking you to describe, in your own way, what you've experienced and how you've felt. I am interested in understanding all of the experiences you've had since you reintegrated, no matter how boring or weird they might seem. I want to know what you think both your successes and challenges have been.

If you like you can think about the question for a few days and bring some notes with you to the interview.

At the interview, I will be recording our discussion so I can remember what was said afterwards. Many of the words will be used in the write-up for my Master's Thesis. Your name will be changed in the write-up in order to keep you anonymous. I would like you to think of another name that you would like me to use instead of your name. I will use that name when I talk about what you have said in my write-up.

Orienting instructions for students who have returned to the learning disabilities program

I'm interested in learning about students' experiences when they go back to the regular classroom after being in a learning disabilities program. I would like you to tell me about the feelings and experiences you had when you went back to the regular classroom. I want to know what it was like for you. I'll be asking you to describe, in your own way, what you experienced and how you felt. I am interested in understanding all of the experiences you had when you reintegrated, no matter how boring or weird they might seem. I want to know what you think both your successes and challenges were.

If you like you can think about the question for a few days and bring some notes with you to the interview.

At the interview, I will be recording our discussion so I can remember what was said afterwards. Many of the words will be used in the write-up for my Master's Thesis. Your name will be changed in the write-up in order to keep you anonymous. I would like you to think of another name that you would like me to use instead of your name. I will use that name when I talk about what you have said in my write-up.